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Solidarity as Hermeneutic

A Revisionist Reading of the Theology of Walter Rauschenbusch

Darlene Ann Peitz

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The sooner we learn that this earth is a very small planet and getting smaller every year, and that our welfare is bound up with all other passengers, the better it is for us. Paul says that we are one body and members one of another, and if one member suffers, all the rest suffer with it. [This is not only religious talk but] . . . a great sociological law and and all modern science and all modern progress thunders its amen. . .

Walter Rauschenbusch
Thanksgiving Day Homily
1898

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ABBREVIATIONS

(Used in Source Notes of Text)

CSC	*Christianity and the Social Crisis*
CSO	*Christianizing the Social Order*
DWBC	*Dare We Be Christians?*
PSA	*For God and the People: Prayers of the Social Awakening*
RK	*The Righteousness of the Kingdom*
SPJ	*The Social Principles of Jesus*
TSG	*A Theology for the Social Gospel*
UM	*Unto Me*

INTRODUCTION

The theology of Walter Rauschenbusch grows out of and is a classic expression of the social gospel movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Rauschenbusch's work, however, is also part of the larger American theological tradition. That is, Rauschenbusch has been recognized not only as the preeminent spokesperson for the social gospel in North America,1 but also as one of North America's most influential theologians. He has been characterized as "the major architect of American Protestant social thought" (Smith, 1955:199), and the "foremost molder of American Christian thought in his generation" (Ahlstrom, 1967:531). He has been placed in the tradition of Jonathan Edwards, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horace Bushnell and others who are considered among the most influential in shaping American religious thought (Beavan quoted by Van Dusen in Sharpe, 1942:410). His books have been looked upon as "the most significant religious publications in the United States, if not the English language, in the first two decades of the twentieth century" (Hopkins, 1940:216). Dores Sharpe, one of Rauschenbusch's most important biographers, believes Rauschenbusch to have "changed both the emphasis and direction of American Protestantism. . . [by bringing] the social implications of Christianity sharply into focus. . . [and thereby] influenc[ing] the whole Christian movement" (1942:402). Although Rauschenbusch's work bears the imprint of the movement out of which it grew and helped define, it also takes its place within the larger tradition of American theology and social thought.

Historically and critically, Rauschenbusch has been interpreted from a number of perspectives, most often from that of the social gospel or the kingdom of God, a central theme of his work. The following study departs from that tradition. It offers a consideration of Rauschenbusch's work as one structured by a hermeneutical method, which has at its interpretative center an anthropology of solidarity. Although there were many influences impacting on Rauschenbusch's

thinking and there are several themes which are crucial to his work, making for the possibility of a number of interpretations, a reading of Rauschenbusch's work as a hermeneutical theology guided by a social understanding of human existence as one of solidarity is supported by several considerations.

First, a reading of Rauschenbusch's work, as well as secondary biographical and critical sources, shows the idea of solidarity to be pervasive throughout his intellectual history and his social and theological writings. When his work is read as a hermeneutical theology, the goal of which is the interpretation of the Christian message for the culture of his day, in the interests of providing a theological foundation for the work of social regeneration, the idea of solidarity appears to lie at the very center of his hermeneutical project, controlling its interpretation.

Second, a reading of his work from the perspective of a hermeneusis of solidarity takes account of all aspects of his work. The liberal and evangelical themes, the ethical and pietistic strains can all be seen to be informed by and take their direction from a radically social understanding of human existence. This perspective makes clear, for example, how his Christocentric reading of scripture can issue in a social mandate for society, or why his piety is inclusive of the social order and expresses his social and ethical concerns, or the reason the kingdom, the central theme of his work, in the face of significant biblical scholarship to the contrary, is interpreted from a socio-historical rather than an eschatological perspective. The idea of solidarity as the the central hermeneutical principle of his method can be seen to account for the major interpretative decisions of Rauschenbusch's work as a whole.

Finally, when Rauschenbusch's work is read from the perspective of its hermeneutical intent and underlying anthropology of solidarity, a retrieval of his work for the present can be made. His method and its guiding understanding of human existence as solidaristic can be seen to be fundamentally modern. His method of interpretation and its anthropology can be seen, in fact, to be required for any Christian reflection that attempts to offer an adequate understanding of the Christian texts as well as the human condition today.

The following study is a constructive effort to offer a new or revised reading of Rauschenbusch's work. It represents Rauschenbusch's work from the perspective of its method and considers the content of his work secondarily, that is, as it relates to his method and guiding anthropology. The focus of the study is how Rauschenbusch's anthropology of solidarity interprets the Christian message, mediating it to the society of his day so that it may be brought to bear on the issues of social regeneration. The study considers his method in light of current

developments in hermeneutical and political theology insofar as these modern theologies heuristically illumine the dynamic of Rauschenbusch's own method. The goal of this reading is the retrieval of Rauschenbusch's work as a hermeneutical theology and its social understanding of human existence as one of solidarity for current theological reflection and public discussion of the social issues today.

The study is divided into five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter I examines how the culture of Rauschenbusch's day, specifically in the movements of Marxist Socialism, Darwinian Evolution and the social gospel itself, mediated the notion of solidarity in their philosophies. It further examines how Rauschenbusch appropriated the idea of solidarity during his eleven-year ministry to the working class of New York City's lower West Side, and developed it as his foundational understanding of human existence and the interpretative center of his work as a whole. The chapter views his New York ministry as crucial to his work insofar as it was his confrontation with the conditions of the working poor and oppressed that catalyzed the formulation of his guiding anthropology.

Chapter II examines Rauschenbusch's method in light of nineteenth and twentieth century developments in the discipline of hermeneutics. Although Rauschenbusch never explicitly articulated a method for his work, he expressed a hermeneutical intent. The dynamic of his method as hermeneutical is brought to light when his work is examined in the context of the hermeneutical theology of Rudolf Bultmann. His anthropology of solidarity emerges as the interpretative principle of his work and method when read in the context of the political theology of Dorothee Soelle. The chapter offers a constructive outline of Rauschenbusch's understanding of the nature of human solidarity, and concludes with an examination of how Rauschenbusch's anthropology of solidarity functions as the hermeneutic of his method in his work as a whole.

Chapter III begins a more detailed examination of Rauschenbusch's method. It explores how his anthropology of solidarity methodologically interprets and mediates the biblical notion of the kingdom of God to his own age. It examines the implications of his interpretation of the kingdom, a "demythologized" interpretation, for his goal of social regeneration and for theological reflection today.

Chapter IV continues the examination of Rauschenbusch's method. It considers how his anthropology of solidarity interprets scripture, retrieving its socio-ethical perspective, and how this perspective is brought to bear on the social order of his day, to issue in a social ethic. It examines his critique of industrial capitalism, and his Christian social ethic as the mediation of a scripturally

informed social anthropology for the society of his day. The chapter concludes with a consideration of Rauschenbusch's Christian ethic as a radically socialized interpretation of the Christian imperative to love. The imperative becomes one of social love, dedicated to the regeneration of the social order. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the implications of this interpretation for Christian life today.

Chapter V concludes the examination of Rauschenbusch's method. It considers how, in the interests of providing a theological foundation for the work of social regeneration, specifically the work of the social gospel, Rauschenbusch's anthropology of solidarity mediates a new interpretation of the Christian doctrines for his day. The chapter examines how the doctrines are socialized when their anthropological referent is changed from human existence privatistically understood to human existence socially understood. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the relation of theology itself to the social order, and its place in the public and political life of a society.

The study concludes with a summary of the discussion of the inherent modernity of Rauschenbusch's method and anthropology and an argument for the possibility of a critical appropriation of his work from the perspective of its method and social anthropology for our theological reflection and social thinking today.

The importance of Rauschenbusch's contribution to the past is fully recognized. This reading attempts to retrieve his work for the present, vis-a-vis its method and anthropology, by showing that method and anthropology to be relevant today. It argues that although Rauschenbusch's work, substantively, is dated, methodologically and anthropologically it is relevant to current theological discussion and offers a required perspective for those engaged in theological and social reflection insofar as their efforts include the mediation of an adequate understanding of the Christian texts for the human condition today.

I.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY: THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF RAUSCHENBUSCH'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE IDEA OF SOLIDARITY

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided a rich and varied context for the mediation of the idea of solidarity. The context was created by several factors. First, the rapid industrialization and unchecked growth of laissez-faire capitalism in the United States, which produced crisis-like conditions for some sections of society, led several analysts to critique unrestrained competition and privatized ownership in light of a cooperative, interdependent understanding of society. Second, Socialism, introduced into the United States from England and Europe by the mid-nineteenth century, was committed to an economic realization of solidarity through a classless society, despite its commitment to an initial stage of proletarian revolution and seizure of power. Third, theories of evolution, particularly biological Darwinian evolution, understood all physical reality to be organically and solidaristically related and evolving, albeit randomly, toward ever more complex forms of life. Finally, the social gospel, a movement within liberal Protestantism, distinguished itself from liberal theologies in general by its interpretation of society as an organic whole and by its attempt to Christianize society through a regeneration of its social structures rather than solely through the conversion of individuals. Each of these phenomena created a context for the the mediation of the idea of solidarity.

The following chapter will consider the social, economic and philosophical milieu in which Rauschenbusch understood and appropriated the idea of solidarity. The experience of his eleven-year ministry in New York is taken to be crucial for the development of his socio-religious perspective governed by an anthropology of solidarity. This first chapter will examine Rauschenbusch's life

with a special focus on his New York ministry. It will then examine his encounter with and selective appropriation of Socialism and Darwinian evolution in terms of the idea of solidarity he found at their respective centers. Finally, it will consider Rauschenbusch's identification of his own work with that of the social gospel and its vision of a regenerated social order. All of these aspects of Rauschenbusch's life and thought evidence that early on he appropriated the idea of solidarity which became the interpretative frame for his reading of scripture, social ethics and Christian theology.

This chapter is divided into five parts: a) a brief overview of Rauschenbusch's life with a special focus on the experience of his New York ministry; b) a description of the conditions contributing to the social problems of Rauschenbusch's day and his analysis of them; c) an examination of his encounter with Marxist Socialism; d) an examination of his encounter with Darwinian evolution; and e) a consideration his identification with the goals of the social gospel. The chapter will focus on the situation in which Rauschenbusch's thinking developed and how that situation catalyzed his formulation of an anthropology of solidarity. It is hoped that the historical analysis of this first chapter will contribute a foundation for the theological conclusions of the chapters to follow and that of the study itself.

Overview of Rauschenbusch's Life with Emphasis on the New York Ministry

The life of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) spans approximately the half century from the end of the Civil War in the United States to the end of World War I in Europe. His life and work bear the imprint of the deep and rapid changes which the United States underwent during these years.[2]

Rauschenbusch was born October 4, 1861 in Rochester, New York. He was raised in a devoutly religious home. He came from six generations of Lutheran clergymen "of pietistic stamp" (Hudson, 1984:5). His Lutheran heritage was radically altered when his father, Augustus, who came to the United States in 1846 as a Lutheran missionary, in 1850, became a Baptist missionary to German-speaking immigrants in Canada and the West. In 1858 Augustus settled in Rochester where he remained for the rest of his life. He served as head of the German department of the Rochester Theological Seminary, training Baptist seminarians for ministry to the German-speaking population of the United States.

The religious environment of Rauschenbusch's home and young years was devout and devoid of social concerns. Of these years, Dores Sharpe writes:

> The religious atmosphere of his early years was untainted by any breath of social thinking. . . . Walter grew up in a religious home but without a social outlook (1942:194).

In 1865, with his mother and two sisters, Rauschenbusch travelled to Germany; they were joined by their father in 1868 and the family returned to Rochester in 1869. Rauschenbusch had begun formal education in Germany and continued his early education at Pfafflin's Private School in Rochester from 1869 to 1878; and the Free Academy of Rochester from 1878 to 1879. Students in the highschool pursued a classical, scientific or business course of studies (Minus, 1989:13). Rauschenbusch chose a "classical curriculum" (Sharpe, 1942:40). Sharpe characterizes Rauschenbusch's youth and school years as sober but not unhappy (1942:40).

After highschool, Rauschenbusch returned a second time to Germany for university study. Four years were spent at the Gymnasium in Gutersloh (1879-1883) where he graduated with first honors in classical studies (Hudson, 1984:5). Concerning his senior thesis, Rauschenbusch wrote in a letter to a friend:

> At present I am taken with preparatory studies for a great essay that I am to write. I want to set forth the idea of sin as represented in the Scandinavian mythology, the power of evil consequent upon sin and its retribution and the hopes of a final salvation for all the world (Sharpe, 1942:49).

After graduation from the Gymnasium in 1883, Rauschenbusch attended lectures at the universities of Berlin, Leipzig, Halle, Griefswald and Erlangen, and travelled throughout Germany (Minus, 1989:33). He had however already decided to enter the ministry and, shortly thereafter, returned to the United States and Rochester to complete work for the arts degree at the University of Rochester and theological preparation for the degree in ministry at Rochester Theological Seminary. The summers of 1884 and 1885, spent as a supply pastor for a small German Baptist church in Louisville, Kentucky, "deepened his sense of vocation" (Hudson, 1984:5). In 1884 he graduated from the University of Rochester; in 1885 from the German section of Rochester Theological Seminary; and in 1886 from its English section. His senior thesis was entitled, "The Ethics of Thinking." By the end of his seminary days he was deeply committed to living

as a disciple of Jesus and spoke of the commitment in a later address to the Cleveland YMCA (1913):

> I wanted to do hard work for God. Indeed one of the great thoughts that came upon me was that I thought to follow Jesus Christ in my personal life and die over again his death. I felt that every Christian ought to participate in the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in that way to help redeem humanity, and it was that thought that gave my life its fundamental direction in the doing of Christian work (Quoted in Sharpe, 1942:57).

After graduation from Rochester in 1886, Rauschenbusch permitted his name to be considered for ministry in the foreign mission field, "quite in keeping with the warmly evangelical witness in which he had been. . . [raised]" (Handy, 1965:193). The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society considered sending him to India as president of Telugu Theological Seminary at Ramapatham. His Old Testament and Hebrew professor, Dr. Osgood, stopped the appointment based on Rauschenbusch's views of the Old Testament, which he judged to be too liberal (Sharpe, 1942:56).

This course of events however transpired only after Rauschenbusch had accepted a call to the Second German Baptist Church of New York City on June 1, 1886 (Minus, 1988:52). Located at Forty-fifth Street and Tenth Avenue, on the northern edge of the depressed area known as Hell's Kitchen, the small Baptist church consisted of 125 members. The members of the small church, for the most part, lived on the edge of poverty. Most of them "brought home meagre incomes from jobs. . . [and] were close enough to misery to enable Rauschenbusch to see the insanity of urban life" (Marty, 1984:348). The church was able to pay its minister nine hundred dollars a year, three hundred of which was used for the rent of a flat of five rooms (Sharpe, 1942:66).

If Rauschenbusch's religious life showed no explicit social impulse to this time, the situation changed radically with the New York ministry. It was the eleven-year ministry in one of New York's most economically depressed areas that was to reorient Rauschenbusch's life, work and theological perspective. Here he came face to face with the struggles of those victimized by the socio-economic structures of a rapidly industrializing nation. How he was to minister in these conditions became the first and central question for the young pastor. He recognized that his own inherited Baptist theology could not meet the needs of the people caught in these socio-economic conditions. In a word,

> Rauschenbusch found that his religious ideas were not capable of being applied to these tragic and sinful conditions. There was a chasm between the gospel for the individual and a gospel big enough to redeem the whole social system (Sharpe, 1942:62).

In a much later article for the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle (1913)*, Rauschenbusch recounts the religious experience of his youth in confrontation with the conditions of his early years of ministry, and the recognition that his own religious education, lacking a social perspective, ill-prepared him for his work. He records:

> I was brought up in a religious way, and when I was about sixteen or seventeen my religious experience began to come to me. At this time it had no social expression in it. . . . Then I began to work in New York and there among the working people, my social education began. I began to understand the connection between religious and social questions. I had no social outlook before. I hadn't known how society could be saved. When I began to apply my previous religious ideas to the conditions I had found, I discovered they didn't fit. . . . I had to set myself against all that I had previously been taught. . . . I had to revise my whole study of the Bible. . . (Quoted in Stackhouse, 1968:16).

Clearly, for Rauschenbusch, a new religious orientation was required. Dores Sharpe says: ". . . conditions were so bad within the city that it was not a safe place for saved souls" (1942:6). Rauschenbusch says that he began to work "to change. . . [the] economic system in order to preserve. . . conscience and. . . religious faith; and to renew and strengthen. . . religion in order to be able to change. . . [the] economic system" (Quoted in McGiffert, 1938:98).

His acquaintance with Leighton Williams of Amity Baptist Church helped Rauschenbusch with his growing awareness of a connection between his religion and social conditions. It was through Williams that Rauschenbusch was introduced to much of the literature of social protest (Hudson, 1984:415).[3] Henry George, who was a candidate for mayor of New York City in the fall of 1886, was also an influence on Rauschenbusch. Rauschenbusch, however, was to work for more fundamental change than George. Paul Minus distinguishes Rauschenbusch's position from that of George vis-a-vis economic competition. Minus says:

> Rauschenbusch endorsed Henry George's proposal that privately owned natural monopolies be taken over by the state, but he

> disagreed with George's claim that repeal of laws creating artificial monopolies would permanently restore healthy competition. Rauschenbusch argued that it was futile to think competition could be reinstituted in such realms, for as the Italian patriot Mazzini had insisted, the forces of modernity tend irreversibly toward association and concentration (1989:66).

In his detailed study of Rauschenbusch's formative years, Klaus Jaehn places the influence of George in the context of Rauschenbusch's already awakened social consciousness. Jaehn says: "it seems that the election campaign itself and the ideas propagated in it did not influence Rauschenbusch; he did not remark on it" (1976:15).

It was Rauschenbusch's encounter with the social conditions of the people of his congregation and the working people of the city that became the determinative influence for his social reorientation. Rauschenbusch says: "There among the working people my social education began" (Quoted in Hudson, 1984:10). Jaehn quotes from a letter written by Rauschenbusch, late in 1886, in which he mentions for the first time, according to Jaehn, interest in social conditions. Rauschenbusch writes:

> There are two things which at present occupy my main interest and dominate my thinking. One thing of concern are the present social conditions, the unequal distribution of property and the growing and justified tension between those who have and those who don't have. Here in New York the gap is very great. The other thing is the spiritual needs of the people around me (Quoted in Jaehn, 1976:16).

In 1887 Rauschenbusch wrote his first paper on "the social question." On the last page of the manuscript he records: "My first paper on the social question" (Quoted by Jaehn, 1976:17). It concludes with the warning:

> Dear friends, there is a social question. No one can doubt it, in whose ears are ringing the wailings borne along on the pent-up torrent of human life. Woe to the man who stands afar off and says: Peace, peace, when there is no peace. The Jews were blinded by existing customs and the traditions of their fathers, and they rejected Christ. Let us take heed lest we too bow to that which is, and refuse allegiance to that which ought to be (Quoted in Jaehn, 1976:17).

By 1888 Rauschenbusch began to describe his experiences and speak out on social issues in short articles published in *Der Sendbote* and in his own paper, *For the Right*. One of his first articles, "Beneath the Glitter" (1887-1888),

graphically describes the story of a poor tailor who is forced to work in a sweatshop of one of the city's great clothing factories late into the very night his young daughter is dying of tuberculosis, and cries out for her absent father. Discounting the sentimentality of the style, the story is a moving account of a tragedy Rauschenbusch took to be not unlike the tragedies that were everyday occurances in the lives of the working poor to whom he ministered.

Rauschenbusch's sermons from this period begin to reflect his growing social consciousness. In an article on the homilies from the early period of his ministry, 1886 to 1891, Max L. Stackhouse examines the growth of Rauschenbusch's social consciousness. Although it was not until 1889, according to Stackhouse, that Rauschenbusch preached his first homily on the social question, Stackhouse argues that as early as 1887, in a homily on faith and grace, Rauschenbusch shifted his understanding of faith from its connection with doctrine to an understanding of it as an expression of confidence in future possibilities (Stackhouse, 1969:142). Stackhouse points out that although Rauschenbusch's sermons at this time were not political, he was more and more engaging socio-political symbols in the analysis of the conditions around him. Stackhouse says:

> There is, as yet, nothing about social or political action, but his analysis of what is valuable for his people is now more and more governed by social and political symbols. There is still a pastoral concern for individuals, but a growing awareness of the competing social forces that undermine or undergird them. . . . The radical Christocentric emphasis of 'Christ in you' begins to move toward an incarnational theme of 'the spirit of Christ among you.' Sanctification in this life begins to have connotations of participation in a righteous and just and loving community (1969:146).

Stackhouse explains that the winter of 1888 to 1889 was difficult, economically and otherwise, for everyone, especially the poor. It was during this winter that Rauschenbusch contracted a flu virus which complicated an already progressive loss of hearing. Although he had suffered a deterioration in his hearing since 1885, by 1889 he experienced almost total deafness (Minus, 1989:51,69). Stackhouse says that Rauschenbusch suffered with his people in many ways, and points out that these experiences led to the insight that the personal sufferings of the poor were directly connected to the socio-economic structures in which they lived. Stackhouse says:

> . . . [From 1889 on] his sermons are decidedly different from his first years. He had personally suffered the destructive effects of inadequate housing, economic depression and urban slums -- structural conditions that destroy persons. The shifts in his thought were existentially confirmed. Personal troubles to be understood must be linked to questions of social structure and social policy (1969:149).

Stackhouse describes Rauschenbusch's first full sermon on the social question, in the spring of 1889, as one which focused on the relationship of the gospel to life in a new way (1969:153). In speaking on Revelation 21, the city of God, Rauschenbusch says: "The best way to get the self ready for Heaven is to get this world ready for God" (Quoted in Stackhouse, 1969:153). Stackhouse argues that when Rauschenbusch drew out the implications of the relationship of the gospel to life, a critique of the social order was forthcoming. Stackhouse says of Rauschenbusch's critique:

> . . . he sees that the powers of destruction among his people are not merely the unwillingness to become committed. Behind the powers of temptation are faulty structures that continually support that temptation in the face of which no amount of. . . preaching and pastoral care could ever establish a spiritually superior people or a good community (1969:153).

Rauschenbusch grew increasingly critical of the economic order. According to Sharpe, Rauschenbusch's analysis of the social conditions of the working poor in the city led him to an increasingly critical stance toward the economics of capitalism:

> Working among the poor and downtrodden, Rauschenbusch began to formulate a program of social action. . . . This experience confirmed a growing conviction that something was radically wrong with the capitalistic system. An analysis of the situation led him to believe 'that industrial crises are not inevitable in nature; they are merely inevitable in capitalism' (1942:61).

In an article for *Der Sendbote*, written in 1890, Rauschenbusch lays blame for the sufferings of the working class directly on the social and economic structures of his day:

> Regarding the social evils, the Christian church restricts itself generally to an exercise of charity. That indeed mitigates the results

> of personal and social sins, but it does not eliminate the causes. . . . very much of existing misery, poverty, illness, even the vices around us are caused by the unjust social structure (Quoted in Jaehn, 1976:38).

Despite the deterioration of his hearing, Rauschenbusch continued to minister successfully to his small community. As the congregation grew from 125 to 213 members, sufficient monies ($25,000) were raised[4] so that by 1889 the community could lay the cornerstone for a new and larger church structure two blocks away (Sharpe, 1942:67). In 1888 and again in 1889 Rauschenbusch was offered a position at Rochester Seminary. In a reply to Rochester he declined for reasons of health, but added: "It seems to me that my work has not yet been completed" (Quoted in Jaehn, 1974:21). Indeed his work had not been completed; he would remain for eight more years ministering to his community and writing and lecturing on behalf of the working poor.

In November, 1889, Rauschenbusch, Leighton Williams, Elizabeth Post and J.E. Raymond joined in the publication of *For the Right*, a small monthly paper devoted to "the interests of the working people of New York City," whose problems and interests were discussed "from the standpoint of Christian Socialism" (Hopkins, 1940:217). Altogether, Rauschenbusch wrote twenty-one articles for the paper. Paul Minus characterizes his articles as falling into two groups: in one group Rauschenbusch sought to convince the workers of the need for nonviolent social change; the other group of articles endorsed a number of objectives -- an eight hour working day, the single tax, municipal ownership of utilities, a city-owned underground transit system, ballot reform and socialization of all railroads (1989:67).

For the first issue Rauschenbusch wrote an article entitled, "Where Does It All Come From?" As in his address to the Baptist Congress, "Natural and Artificial Monopolies" (1890), he discussed individual ownership and control of the earth's natural resources -- land, gas, oil, coal, ore, water -- which he strongly opposed. He characterized the conditions of the workers as a situation in which a "thin ... sheetiron blanket [has been placed] over these United States which makes it hard for human hands [to reap] that [which] God has stored for us in the earth" (Quoted in Bodein, 1944:16). The critique of the privatization of the ownership of the earth's resources, resulting in the amassing of great wealth by a few at the expense of the needs and well being of all, foreshadowed the very heart of Rauschenbusch's writings on the social crisis.

Unfortunately, *For the Right* failed to reach the working class readership for which it was intended; it found only a small group of sympathetic, middle-class Protestant progressives. Fewer than two hundred subscriptions were sold (Minus, 1989:67). The newspaper lasted only eighteen months. Its final publication date was March, 1891. Although it was "no more radical than Gladden and the other moderate social Christians" (May, 1949:190), it was "a serious attempt by the editors to put into practice their ideas on social reform" (Jaehn, 1976:26). Minus describes the paper as "a rare combination of perspectives, but for most affluent Christians. . . it was too 'radical,' and for distressed workers, eager for corrective action, it was too 'Christian'" (Minus, 1989:67). Rauschenbusch himself believed the failed venture had served as a "rallying point" for a small group of Baptist ministers in New York and given them experience with "methods of agitation" (Minus, 1989:67).

By 1891 Rauschenbusch was almost completely deaf and he feared he would have to resign his ministry. In a diary entry quoted by Minus, he writes:

> My hearing which had steadily decreased since I first discovered its failing in 1885 took a sudden drop downward, so that I could hear only what was spoken directly to me and very near to me. I saw then that I should have to resign my position (Minus, 1989:69).

In January, 1891, Rauschenbusch offered his resignation to the church and told his congregation that he planned to go abroad for a year of study as a prelude to a writing career (Minus, 1989:69). His congregation however refused to accept his resignation and offered instead a year's sabbatical with pay (Minus, 1989:70). Rauschenbusch accepted the offer with gratitude and, in a diary entry quoted by Minus, writes:

> Their affection surprised and held me. I realized the church gave me a position for effective work such as I could scarcely find elsewhere (1989:70).

In March, 1891, Rauschenbusch, with his sister Emma, took a nine-month leave for Europe, specifically England and Germany. The trip was to have a twofold purpose. Rauschenbusch was seeking social and theological answers to the growing social question, and help for his deafness. Paul Minus characterizes the goals of Rauschenbusch's journey in the following way:

> [His]. . . eagerness to return to Europe had mounted during the winter. Much of what he needed at this stage of his life seemed to

> await him there. For the last several years he had plunged deeper and deeper into the social question, but the demands of his pastorate had given him little opportunity for systematic reading and writing. . . . He also wanted to observe firsthand the reform movements that appeared to be so instructive to Americans like himself just starting on the road European pioneers had taken earlier. Along with this . . . however, there was something more personal he sought. He had heard of the progress Germans had made in treating deafness, and he hoped against hope that his hearing could be restored (1989:71).

He and Emma travelled first to England to study the work of the Salvation Army, Fabianism and English Socialism. Rauschenbusch was taken with the English Christian Socialist movement and "regarded the Fabian vision and the Birmingham achievement as Socialism at its best" (Minus, 1989:75). After two months in England, they travelled to Hamburg, where Rauschenbusch's parents had retired, and his younger sister Frieda lived. In May, the couple travelled to Berlin. Here Rauschenbusch visited an ear specialist; his case was diagnosed "incurable" and he never again sought medical treatment (Minus, 1989:76). In August, the couple went to the university town of Greifswald where Rauschenbusch spent the remainder of his time in the university libraries. Through an examination of the library slips preserved by the university libraries in Griefswald and Rauschenbusch's own notes, Klaus Jaehn reports on Rauschenbusch's social and religious reading during his stay. Jaehn says:

> I have been able to decipher about seventy titles. These are the subjects and areas in which he was most interested: The origin of the Messianic idea and of the Kingdom of God idea in late Judaism, the life of Christ, and ethics, especially in connection with statistics and sociology. He also read standard books by Ranke, Sybel and Trietschke, and the two most important books by Frederick D. Maurice. He also acquainted himself with the two significant publications on the social question by Herman Cremer (1976:42).

It was at this time that Rauschenbusch found in the biblical doctrine of the kingdom of God the religious expression of his developing social vision. In a later statement on his adoption of the kingdom ideal as the religious centerpiece of his social vision at this time, Rauschenbusch says:

> . . . the idea of the Kingdom of God offered itself as the real solution. . . Here was something so big that absolutely nothing that interested me was excluded from it. Was it a matter of personal religion? Why, the Kingdom of God begins with that. . . Was it a

> matter of getting justice for the working man? . . . Does not the Kingdom of God consist of this: that God's will shall be done on earth? . . . Wherever I touched life, there was the Kingdom of God (Quoted in Sharpe, 1942:62).

Rauschenbusch returned to the United States and his congregation in December, 1891, without having achieved his goal of improving his hearing.[5] However, he was strengthened in both his social and religious convictions.[6]

In May of 1892, at the Baptist National Convention, held in Philadelphia, Rauschenbusch, Leighton Williams, Nathaniel Schmidt and Samuel Zane Batten met to consider the formation of a small group which would meet periodically "to consider some methods in closer cooperation in Christian work" (Sharpe, 1942:117). Batten seemed to be "the one who suggested the formation of an organization" (Sharpe, 1942:117). When the group met again in July, in New York, the proposed name for the group was "The Brotherhood of the Kingdom" (Minus, 1989:85). Leighton Williams says of this meeting that "[Batten]. . . had been led to dwell much on the teachings of Jesus regarding the kingdom, and suggested. . . [that the organization] be devoted to the study and realization of that idea" (Quoted in Hopkins, 1938:140). The group was officially constituted as the Brotherhood of the Kingdom at the office of *The National Baptist* in Philadelphia in December, 1892 (Bodein, 1944:18). The first issue of *The National Baptist* of 1893 published an article entitled "The Brotherhood of the Kingdom," which appears to be the first statement of purpose issued by the group. The article states:

> Because the individualistic conception of personal salvation has pushed out of sight the collective idea of a Kingdom of God on earth, Christian men seek for the salvation of individuals and are comparatively indifferent to the spread of the spirit of Christ in the political, industrial, social, scientific and artistic life of humanity, and have left these as the undisturbed possessions of the spirit of the world (Quoted in Bodein, 1944:18).

In its meetings, presentations and discussions of papers presented, the group discussed all aspects of the social life of its day. According to C. Howard Hopkins and Ronald White: "While the kingdom ideal was predominate in the early conferences, during its life the Brotherhood discussed practically every significant social problem that was arousing popular interest in those days" (1976:74-75).

The Brotherhood met annually for twenty-three years, during the summer months of each year, on the family farm of Leighton Williams -- Marlborough-on-the-Hudson -- upstate New York. At its beginning, the group included eleven members but expanded to include as many as fifty (Minus, 1989:87). After 1895 the meetings included women and non-Baptists on an equal basis with all other group members (Minus, 1989:87). Even though it had little concrete social or economic impact on the world it sought to change,[7] it conscientized its own Baptist community. Sharpe evaluates its influence when he says: "above all, in its insistence upon the application of the ethical principles of Jesus to the social as well as the individual life and the reconstruction of industry and commerce on the basis of justice, solidarity and cooperation, it broadened and Christianized the task of the Church" (1942:139).

Rauschenbusch remained in his New York pastorate until 1897. In that year he and his wife, Pauline Rother, whom he had married in 1893, returned to Rochester.[8] He accepted a professorship in New Testament in the German department of Rochester Seminary. In addition to New Testament, he also taught natural science, civil government and courses in zoology and English (Sharpe, 1942:71). His father, Augustus, died in 1899 and left his own autobiography incomplete. Rauschenbusch completed and published it as *Das Leben von Augustus Rauschenbusch* in 1901. In 1902 Rauschenbusch accepted the chair of church history in the English division of Rochester Seminary. He held that chair until his death in 1918.

Rauschenbusch continued to teach, lecture and publish in the interests of the working class and a just social order. His social thought deepened and matured, but it did not change. It was during these years in Rochester that his major works were written: *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907); *For God and the People: Prayers of the Social Awakening* (1910); *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912), developed from his Earl Lectures given at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley (1910) and his Merrick Lectures, delivered at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware (1911); *Unto Me* (1912), a small book addressed to social workers; *Dare We Be Christians?* (1914); *The Social Principles of Jesus* (1916); and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917) developed from his Taylor Lectures given at Yale.[9]

World War I erupted in 1914. Rauschenbusch continued his work of teaching, lecturing and writing in the service of social regeneration and the social gospel. Yet, the war affected him deeply. Not only was he often misunderstood as a German sympathizer, especially after having joined with a few others in the

circulation of a statement in 1915 deploring the export of munitions, but he was also personally grieved by the war's tragedy -- its destruction of life, democracy and human solidarity. In March, 1918, when he stopped work because of illness, he wrote: "Since 1914 the world is full of hate, and I cannot expect to be happy again in my lifetime" (Quoted in Sharpe, 1942:356). He had worn black crepe on his lapel since 1914 and was committed to wearing it until the war ended.

Rauschenbusch died of cancer on July 25, 1918, four months before the end of the war. Anna Singer, an early biographer of Rauschenbusch, along with others, believed that grief over the war was a contributing factor to his death. Singer writes:

> His nearest friends believe that his grief over the condition of the world was a contributing cause. The World War had been shattering for years the ideals of human brotherhood, for which he had so steadfastly labored, and it was thought that his grief had greatly depleted his powers, so that he did not have his full vitality for recuperation (1926:21).

Shortly after Rauschenbusch's death, the social gospel, the movement that Rauschenbusch had significantly shaped, went into eclipse. The war itself seemed to signal, for a time at least, the end of an era of hope. After the war, a vision of communality and solidarity seemed naive and obsolete in an atmosphere of post-war "realism" and isolationism.

The principles for Rauschenbusch's social philosophy and for his subsequent interpretation of scripture and Christian doctrine were formed in his New York ministry. Dores Sharpe points out:

> Rauschenbusch's social philosophy became fairly set in the New York years. As with his style, there was subsequent developments but no real changes. . . . The general conclusions at which he early arrived were the broad platform on which he stood at the end of his day (1942:193).

Rauschenbusch's passion for justice and his social vision came less from within the church than from outside. His confrontation with the conditions of the working poor of his congregation in New York City created the necessity for his social analysis and catalyzed the formulation of his interpretation of human existence. M.L. Stackhouse, referring to a talk Rauschenbusch delivered in 1891 entitled "The Social Problem Is Our Problem" says:

> From that point on, his course was fixed. The social dimension of his thought came into full parity with the personal dimensions and he had to engage in a total reconstruction of his reading of the New Testament. . . He had his radicality thrust upon him by honest theological, ethical and pastoral engagement in the lives of his people as they struggled amid the slums of New York. He was. . . convinced that the spiritual ills were backed by legalized economic oppression and had to be attacked at their roots. . . (1969:159).

The principles for Rauschenbusch's social analysis and subsequent theological interpretation were developed in the crucible of his New York ministry. His analysis of the social conditions of the working poor and his formulation of a social understanding of human existence directed his focus to the connection between the religion of a people and the social conditions in which they lived.

Rauschenbusch's Analysis of the Socio-Economic Conditions of the United States of the Late Nineteenth Century

What were the socio-economic conditions of the United States at the time of Rauschenbusch's ministry which created the conditions of poverty and misery for so many? How did Rauschenbusch analyze and critique these conditions so that the insights derived therefrom formed the guiding principle of all his subsequent work?

Historians of the nineteenth century characterize the United States from the end of the Civil War to the beginning of the twentieth century as a country in which the machine, in the context of industrialization, was transforming the country from a nation of rural and agrarian towns to a nation of swiftly growing cities, sprawled around manufacturing centers. Laissez-faire capitalism was the economic foundation of the country. C.H. Hopkins gives a general description of the period when he says:

> The years immediately following the Civil War opened a new era in American life. During the period of 'reconstruction' the forces of industrial revolution, stimulated by the demands of the great conflict, swept triumphantly to victory over the agricultural economy that remained from the nation's youth. By 1880 a vigorous capitalism had laid the foundations of modern America in an industrial order

> that was transforming the rural United States of Lincoln and Lee into a closely knit nation of swarming cities (1940:11).

The production base of the nation shifted from an agricultural economy to an industial, manufacturing one (Sharpe, 1942:2). Robert Handy says, "The amount of money invested in manufacturing plants increased a dozen times in the last 40 years of the nineteenth century and the number of employed workers doubled more than twice as the United States became by 1890 the first manufacturing nation of the world in the quality and value of many products" (1976:264).

Its increased productivity and growing manufacturing ability changed the United States from a nation dependent upon Europe and England to a nation independent in itself, enjoying the status of a world power. It was during this period that "America made the transition from an agrarian federation to an industrial, urban nation state, from a pastoral adjunct of the British Empire to an independent power in the world" (Boller, 1969:viii).

If the nation was moving from "muscular energy to mechanical power" (Hopkins-White, 1976:56), and from a dependent status to an international power, it was also changing from "individualism to collectivism" (Hopkins-White, 1976:56). In its national life, its people experienced a growing dependence on national resources and institutions; the nation's urbanization and industrialization forced national life into a mold of increased interdependence and collectivity. E.A. Ross, a contemporary critic and analyst of the times, vividly characterized the increasingly collective nature of the life of the nation. For Ross,

> Under our present manner of living, how many of my vital interests I must entrust to others! Nowadays the water main is my well, the trolly car my carriage, the banker's safe my old stocking, the policeman's billy my fist. My own eyes and nose and judgment defer to the inspector of food, or drugs, or gas, or factories, or tenements, or insurance companies. I rely on others to look after my drains, invest my savings, nurse my sick and teach my children. I let the meat trust butcher my pig, the oil trust mould my candles, and the sugar trust boil my sorghum, the coal trust chop my wood, and the barb wire company split my rails (1907:3).

If the nation had changed from a life-style of individualism to one of interdependence, laissez-faire capitalism, however, continued to structure the nation's economic life. Private enterprise controlled the process of industrialization. Although industry and manufacturing involved large portions

of the nation in production and consumption, ownership of business, machine and natural resources remained in private hands. Visser 't Hooft characterizes the situation in which capitalism and industrialization were synchronized in a country of great natural wealth and few binding laws regarding the protection of the common good. He says:

> What happened in England, due to the synchronizing of the industrial revolution with the development of a new laissez-faire philosophy of industry and trade, was reproduced in America, with the difference that it was greatly enhanced by the natural influence of a pioneer environment and the absence of binding social traditions. Thus, in America, during the nineteenth century industry came to be characterized by an excessive individualism . . . (1928:22).

Rugged individualism in economics deserved reexamination in light of the growing interdependence of America's people. Economic individualism however went unquestioned, especially where great profits were to be made. Sydney Ahlstrom states the situation succinctly when he says: "Individualism in the old sense became a liability for all but the industrial and banking tycoons" (1972:736).

As the nation became increasingly interdependent, particularly in the production and consumption of goods, a small group of individuals profited immensely through private ownership of resources and means of production depended upon by all. They not only owned the great factories and machines, but were supplied with cheap labor by those moving into the cities from rural areas and by immigrations from abroad. Without public or government control of natural resources, production means, or labor, a small group amassed great wealth at the expense of many, particularly the poor and working classes. J.C. Brauer, a historian of the period, describes the general economic situation of the business of industrial capitalism when he says:

> The age of big business had dawned with a vengeance. New, powerful factories had been built during the Civil War and expanded at the turn of the century. Thousands of millions were produced, and at one time only one tenth of the people controlled nine tenths of the wealth of the nation. . . Fortunes were built on speculation, shrewdness, luck and sheer determination. There was little or no control over the action of these men so long as they stayed within the limits of a very lax body of laws. . . . Labor was cheap and plentiful, making high wages impossible. . . The 'robber barons' as the great lawless industrialists and financiers were later called,

> moved toward ever greater control over large segments of American life (1965:234-235).

Wealth was being created by great strides yet poverty was also increasing steadily alongside it. By the first part of the twentieth century, the great corporations were employing 86 per cent of the American labor force and producing more than 87 per cent of the total volume of all that America produced (Sweet, 1947:141-142). From 1860 to 1900, the wealth of the United States increased from 16 to 126 billion dollars, and a chief reaper of the nation's wealth was the corporation (Hopkins, 1940:98).

In light of the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth, the question of the age for many became one of the nature of control over the machines and resources. Was the tremendous wealth and power generated by the machine to remain in the hands of a few or be controlled by and for the common good? Sidney Mead quotes the socially conscious editors of an 1892 edition of *The Congregationalist* who ask: "Shall this tremendous industrial power be in the arbitrary control of individuals or be exercised under the conditions of responsibility?" (Quoted in Mead, 1963:177).

The easy availability of labor and resources for industrialization provided conditions ripe for abuse. The American historian Vernon Parrington points out that exploitation had been given both resource and technique (1926:28-30). He summarizes the tragic conditions when he says: "All things were held cheap, and human life cheapest of all" (1926:30). In the midst of plenty, industrialization, structured by private ownership and controlled by profit, created great poverty. Parrington observes:

> Freedom had become individualism, and individualism had become the inalienable right to preempt, to exploit, to squander. . . . The Gilded Age threw itself into the business of money getting. . . . From the sober restraints of aristocracy, the old inhibitions of Puritanism, the niggard lines of an exacting economy . . . swung far back in reaction, and with the discovery of limitless opportunities for exploitation it allowed itself to get drunk. . . . It was an anarchistic world of strong, capable men, selfish, unenlightened, amoral -- an excellent example of what human nature will do with undisciplined freedom (1926:30-36).

The most glaring feature of the Gilded Age was the creation of conditions of disparate wealth: a small class of great wealth existed at the expense of a large working class which lived in poverty conditions. Hopkins says that between 1860

and 1890 the national wealth increased from 16 billion to 78.5 billion and over half of it was held by 40,000 families or one-third of 1 per cent of the population (1940:79). He goes on to say that in the decade of 1870 to 1880 real wages "never above the bare subsistence level," declined from an average of $400 per year to $300 per year (1940:79). These statistics may be compared with Winthrop Hudson's report of the financial data for the year 1890; they evidence no relief in the situation. Hudson says: "By 1890 it was estimated that 1 per cent of the families of the country received one-quarter of the national income, and seven years later one-tenth of the American people were said to own nine-tenths of the national wealth" (1961:308). The historians Charles and Mary Beard offer a vivid description of the haves and have-nots created by a system in which the disparity of wealth was the foundation of the social order. They write:

> . . . two facts remained indisputable: the richest class in America was composed of those who owned factories, mines, railways, and urban property. . . and the swiftness of their accumulations outrivaled all previous achievements in the history of lucre. . . Housed in a grand style. . . the American captains of business enterprise poured out their riches in the purchase of goods.
> . . .
> Housed in the back streets and alleys behind the symbols of riches and power lived the urban masses who washed the linen, dug the trenches, served the wheels, and watched the forges for Midas and Dives. . . . With scarcely any direction other than that given by avid real estate speculators and greedy landlords, the tenements of the poor stretched and sprawled forward and outward in haphazard fashion, devoid of beauty, comfort or health. . .
> . . .
> . . . the cash nexus pure and simple was the outstanding characteristic of social relations during the gilded age in America (1933:384, 394).

Although a relatively large middle class existed in the country at this time, "it had few ties of sympathy with the propertyless urban proletariat. . ." (Beard-Beard, 1933:402). America became divided along class lines defined by the distribution of wealth: "Americans, once divided on sectional lines, became increasingly conscious of a new grouping and tended to think of themselves as farmers [and] wage earners, or industrialists and businessmen" (Gabriel, 1940:56).

If society was divided along class lines based on economic disparity, the alienation of the laborer grew as the laboring class came to be increasingly exploited. "Wages were low, hours were long and working conditions were

almost uniformly bad" (Hudson, 1961:308). One historian gives the government's financial report of the earning power of skilled labor during the 1860's. He says:

> . . . a government report at the end of 1866 showed that, while wages had increased on an average of 60 per cent, in the past six years, the cost of living had increased 90 per cent. The wage of ordinary skilled labor was $2.00 for a ten-hour day. Women workers in factories. . . got $3.50 to $4.00 a week. Girls in dry-goods stores in the larger cities had a working day from 7:30 in the morning until 9 and sometimes 10 o'clock at night, with a wage of not more than $5.00 a week, and with none of the facilities for comfort or even decency which are. . . universal (Garrison, 1933:151).

C.H. Hopkins, citing Washington Gladden, reports that the situation of wages had become no better by the 1880's. Hopkins says, "Gladden. . . calculated that the real annual wages of labor were little, if any, higher in 1886 than they had been in 1860, whereas during that same period the national wealth increased from 16 to 43 billion dollars and the value of manufactured goods trebled" (1940:81). When one reads a report by Rauschenbusch of the Bethlehem Steel strike of 1910, it is clear that conditions for labor had not changed from the 1860's to as late as 1910, at least in some places. Rauschenbusch reports:

> Take the strike at South Bethlehem in 1910. . . Here were nine thousand men making steel for a wealthy corporation in one of the great protected industries of Pennsylvania. More than half of them worked twelve hours a day, and nearly all of the other workers between ten and eleven hours, with frequent overtime. By the device of a time bonus system the work was speeded up and men had to earn the bonus to get the wages prevailing elsewhere. . . . In addition, between 28 and 43 per cent of the men worked seven days in a week. Furthermore, whenever the day and night shift turned about, the seven day workers had to work a shift of twenty four hours of labor without rest. Sixty-one per cent earned $2.16 for a twelve hour day; 31.9 per cent earned less than $1.68 in twelve hours (CSC, 1912:187).

For all of labor's toleration of low wages, long hours, and dangerously unhealthy working conditions, there was little or no job security. Recurrent crises in production resulting in lay-offs, the introduction of labor-saving

machinery, and the growing size of the labor force fed by waves of immigration threatened the worker's job security. J.R. Everett says:

> As the industrial revolution progressed, machines began to take the place of the skilled workman, and the effect was a general lowering of the position of skilled labor. In addition to introducing labor-saving machinery, the capitalists searched for new sources from which cheap labor could be drawn. Consequently new supplies of workmen were provided on an exceedingly cheap basis by congress when in 1864 it passed the Alien Contract Immigration Law. Under this law, an employer could go the southern European countries and pick up large numbers of people. . . Since the introduction of mass machine production dissolved most of the skills, this foreign labor was equally as effective as the native American (1946:5).

C.H. Hopkins reports that, "Technological unemployment, immigration, and other factors combined by 1900 to create a standing army of a million unemployed. . ." (1940:79).

The difficult working conditions were immeasurably worsened by the underlying impersonality of the relation between worker and employer that lay at the heart of capitalist industry. One example of the impersonality between employer and laborer was the creation of the corporation as employer; here, working in a large factory system "removed from all personal contact with. . . employers, laborers were as parts of a huge impersonal machine that went clanking on and on" (Brauer, 1965:239). Further, as the laboring class was required to become more and more machine tenders, its work came to be degrading. The historian Paul Boller describes the effects of the dehumanization on labor when he says:

> For the workingman, as for the farmer, there were problems of status, identity and self-regard involved in adjusting to the new order of things. The transformation of skilled workers into machine tenders and the decline of personal relations between worker and employer which had been characteristic of pre-industrial society exacerbated the economic plight in which the American worker found himself in the late nineteenth century. . . . An old Yiddish sweatshop song puts it even better. . . : 'I work, work, work, without end; why and for whom I know not, I care not, I ask not: I am a machine' (Boller, 1969:99).

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the condition of labor was one of poverty, oppression, and alienation.

In time, labor was forced to create some protection, power and meaning for itself through the formation of labor unions. "The only alternative open to the oppressed was to organize into groups and to find strength in numbers" (Brauer, 1965:257). The distress created by the panics of 1873 and 1893, during which laborers were laid off without notice in order that losses incurred by capital be recouped, gave further impetus to the organization of unions (Everett, 1946:6). The two most important unions of the period were the Knights of Labor (1869) and the American Federation of Labor (1881) (Sweet, 1947:141-142). James Dombrowski points out that, although by 1870 there were 32 international trade unions in the United States, by 1880 only 18 per cent of the national trade unions were surviving (1936:3-4). Labor continued to face an uphill battle in the late nineteenth century, even with the help of organized unions.

In the attempt to better the conditions of labor, whenever conflicts with capital arose the unions employed the strike as their major defensive weapon. Although it was the unions' most effective bargaining tool, it tragically disrupted the fabric of society. Jerald Brauer points out that:

> The strike led to violence because the employers were determined to break the unions. They were looked upon as a threat to the law of competition; therefore the bosses hired. . . thugs to attack the picket lines. . . and to open the lines for production (1965:257).

The number of strikes from 1881 to 1900, as reported by the Bureau of Labor, was an astounding 23,798.[10] Four of these were particularly explosive and gained national attention: the railroad strike of 1877; the Haymarket strike in Chicago, 1886; the Carnegie Steel Plant strike, 1892; and the Pullman Car strike, 1894 (Mead, 1963:163).

The strikes were not only destructive of the social fabric but of human life as well. Their violence created the possibility of injury and death for any who participated. One historian says:

> During the 1870's and 1880's labor unrest swept the nation's railroads. At Pittsburgh alone, twenty-six people were killed in 1877. In 1886 the McCormick Harvester strike occurred. Six of the workers were killed one day, and in the following, a riot occurred in Chicago's Haymarket Square that claimed the lives of seven policemen; seventy persons were injured. The Carnegie Corporation's Homestead plant was struck in 1892. Several hundred Pinkerton detectives and the state militia were summoned to break it

> up. Seven were killed. In 1894 the Pullman strike was called. Railroads in a number of states were halted. Rioting, looting, burning and shooting occurred throughout the country (Bedell, et al., 1975:322).

Although a complacent society in general had little tolerance for the strikes, and most church leaders urged arbitration before strike, Rauschenbusch pointed out that:

> . . . a weak class is struggling against a strong class, and. . . the odds are against the workers. The great strikes that get notoriety simply heave up and turn to daylight conditions that [have]. . . long existed and which continue to exist elsewhere (CSC, 1912:186).

Finally, the very quality of life for the laboring class was worsened immeasurably by the growing slums of the cities which were created in part by capital and in part by uncontrolled immigration from Europe and abroad.[11] Aaron Abell, historian of urban development and its impact on the American Protestant churches reports that:

> During the forty year period, 1860 to 1900, the number of cities of eight thousand or more inhabitants increased from 141 to 547, and the proportion of townsfolk from a sixth to nearly a third. . . . In these cities foreigners. . . comprised over two-thirds of the population. . . . Low wages and high rents forced large numbers of the working class, mainly immigrants, into crowded slums. . . (1962:3-4)[12]

According to C.H. Hopkins, the cities "grew almost overnight, and without plan or hindrance, into vast sprawling cities whose social, sanitary and religious problems were as staggering as their mushroom development" (1940:98). Hopkins expands his description of their difficult living conditions when he says:

> Crowded with unassimilable aliens and faced with tremendous social problems, these cities were struggling with lawlessness and crime, tenements, crooked politics, delinquency, sanitation, traffic, inadequate religious resources, and a host of other complexities (1940:99).[13]

On the one hand, the cities may have been one of the "marvels of the eighties" (Sweet quoted by Clipsham, 1981:113), intensely alive and bursting with hopefulness (1981:113) for an ascendant middle-class, but for the working poor,

they were centers of "poverty, unemployment, injustice, misery and corruption" (1981:113). If they had started as trade centers for an expanding agrarian economy with their pattern laid by 1860, by 1900 they were shaped by private capital in control of industrialization. They had become "'storm centers' of a new industrial order, and as such the prime theatres of social maladjustment and unrest" (Hopkins-White, 1976:51).

These conditions constituted the larger context in which Rauschenbusch lived and ministered to the physical as well as spiritual needs of his small congregation. His analysis of these socio-economic conditions resulted in a social and religious critique of competitive capitalism and a vision of a regenerated social order built on the premise of the interdependence and solidarity of all human life.

Rauschenbusch came to see private ownership driven by profit in a situation of unlimited competition as the major source of the poverty, injustice and misery of the socio-economic order of his day. Personal greed had divided society, exploited the worker, and created the problems which were associated with the industrial revolution. A restructuring of the economic order, on the premise of a social understanding of human existence, was required if all individuals were to be offered the possibility of a Christian existence in a just social order. Structures of collectivity and cooperation came to be viewed as a major remedy for a society suffering under the blight of capitalist greed. In an article entitled "The Social Awakening of the Churches" (1911), Rauschenbusch says:

> Until recently ours was a land devoted to agriculture, whereas the modern social question becomes an actuality only under capitalistic conditions. . . Now we have rapidly become an industrial people. . . . Land, mines, the means of communication, ready money, all are in the hands of fewer and fewer men, who have it in their power at any time to tie up the great arteries of the social body. . . . our people is struggling in the meshes of the great capitalists (563).

Rauschenbusch offers an analysis of the social crisis in his first major work, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907). His analysis focuses on the capitalist system and its structures of private ownership of production means and the earth's natural resources. In the chapter entitled "The Present Crisis," Rauschenbusch lays out in detail the source of the present crisis as he understands it (220).

Rauschenbusch begins his analysis by arguing that humankind has always suffered want both from the exigencies of nature and the iniquities of others. However, historically, as nature was gradually subdued by science, it was humankind itself that emerged as the real enemy of human life in the form of exploitation (212). With the invention of the machine, social misery as well as economic production took giant leaps forward. "Modern poverty. . . began when man for the first time in history began to escape from poverty. . . . [A] long drawn wail of misery followed wherever the power machine came" (214). This was the case because the machine was seized upon by those who were sufficiently powerful, ruthless and wealthy enough to take control. The machine and its productive capacity became an economic tool in the hands of private owners rather than a tool in the hands of all for the good of society as a whole. Individuals rather than society controlled the means of production upon which society depended. The control of the machine by capital created two greatly disparate classes based on wealth and poverty. It generated structures of injustice, oppression and misery for large sections of society. The paradox of the machine, for Rauschenbusch, was that "the instrument by which all humanity could rise from want. . . actually submerged a large part of the people in want and fear" (217). Capitalism had risen to power on the back of industrialization and the working class (218). In the end, the development of the machine was not guided by an interest in the good of all, but the profit of a few.

Morality, according to Rauschenbusch, had failed to keep pace with industrial and economic development. The machine, guided in its growth by profit, served a small sector of society while keeping a great working class in poverty. For Rauschenbusch:

> That such an evil turn could be given to an event that held such a power for good, is a crushing demonstration that the moral forces in humanity failed to keep pace with its intellectual and economic development. Men learned to make wealth much faster than they learned to distribute it justly. Their eye for profit was keener than their ear for the voice of God and humanity (218).

Rauschenbusch examines the history of the United States and its evolution from an agrarian nation to an industrial nation. He argues that during the time the United States was primarily an agrarian nation its homestead acts of the 1800's distributed the land in proximate justice. Government land was awarded in fairness, that is, to those who needed it and were able to cultivate it to meet their needs. For Rauschenbusch, "The salutary element in our system was not so

much that the owner owned his land so absolutely, but that the land was so evenly distributed among the people and was so accessible to all who were able to use it" (224). When agriculture was the chief source of wealth in the United States, the social question was "how to counteract the tendency toward the aggregation of land in a few hands" (229). However, now that the United States had changed from an agricultural to an industrial country, the question centered on the ownership of the machine. If an agrarian people cannot lose control of the land without dire results, the chief danger for an industrial people was likewise the loss of control of their means of production (230-231). Rauschenbusch holds that this is precisely what has happened to the American laborer: "The people lost control of the tools of industry more completely than they ever lost control of the land" (231). For Rauschenbusch, the loss of control of production tools by the laboring class has been disastrous, not only for the laborers but society as a whole. He says:

> No attempt is made to allot to each workman his share in the profits of joint work. Instead he is paid a fixed wage. The upward movement of this wage is limited by the productiveness of his work; the downward movement. . . by the willingness of the workman to work at so low a return. His willingness will be determined by his needs. . . . The less he needs, the more he can get; the more he needs, the less he will get. This is the exact opposite of the principle that prevails in family life. . . In our family life we have solidarity and happiness; in our business life we have individualism and. . . not. . . happiness (230-231).

Rauschenbusch points out that the great wealth which has been created has gone to those who have been strong enough to seize it. He cites the Report of the Interstate Commerce Commission of 1902 which states that from 1896 to 1902 the average wages of railway employees (1,200,000 men) increased from $550 to $580 or 5%, while the net earnings of the owners increased from $377,000,000 to $610,000,000 or 62% (233).

Rauschenbusch argues that there is a great and increasing body of "chronic wretchedness" in the land. He also argues that "it is greatest where our industrial system has worked out its conclusions most completely" (246). For Rauschenbusch, individual cases of misery are understandable, given the fragility and exigencies of human existence, but where there are millions of cases of poverty and deprivation, evidencing well-defined patterns and even reducible to certain laws, then the "misery is not an individual, but a social matter, due to

causes in the structure of our society and curable only by social reconstruction" (246).

The conclusion of Rauschenbusch's analysis is that an economic system structured solely by private ownership, and driven by profit in a context of unlimited competition is an unjust system with dire effects directly at odds with an understanding of society and human existence as social and solidaristic. For Rauschenbusch, "Our blessings have failed to bless us because they were not based on justice and solidarity" (233).

Rauschenbusch's analysis issued in a critique of the capitalistic system and a program for the reordering of society along the lines of a more radically social understanding of human existence as one of interdependence and solidarity. This understanding was economically concretized in Rauschenbusch's program of cooperative ownership of the means of production and the natural resources of the earth.

Rauschenbusch's vision of a social order based on an understanding of human existence as interdependent and solidaristic was catalyzed by the experience of his New York ministry. The notion of solidarity, however, can also be seen to have been mediated to Rauschenbusch in the philosophies of Socialism and Darwinism, significant currents of thought gaining attention during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is to a consideration of his encounter with these powerful intellectual currents of his day and his appropriation of the idea of solidarity he found at their respective centers that we can now turn.

Rauschenbusch and Marxist Socialism

Although Rauschenbusch remained a devout Baptist throughout his life, his social views did not come from within the church.[14] He drew on the thinking and insights of the social philosophies of his day as a means of interpreting the social conditions he encountered. These insights however were never unrelated to his religious life. Robert Handy speaks of the relation of the social and religious in Rauschenbusch's life when he says:

> Rauschenbusch was very much aware that his social views did not come from the church but from the outside, from personal contact with poverty and unemployment, from his own association with social reform literature and movements.

> . . .
> To the earlier religious passion which had called him to the ministry was now added a social passion that engaged him in reforms and writing and action. But how were these two passions of his life to be related?
> . . .
> The individualistic, evangelistic interpretation of Christian faith which he had inherited and largely accepted scarcely provided the resources for confronting the social problem. . . The effort to bring them together into a satisfying whole launched Rauschenbusch on the main work of his life, and led him to revise much of his understanding of the Christian faith (1965:194).

Rauschenbusch was never a member of the Socialist party, yet he drew on the premises and insights of Socialism. He appropriated its social analysis and embraced the idea of solidarity he found at the center of its philosophy.

Socialism was transplanted to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. It was very much in evidence late in that century. Marxist Socialism predicted a revolution on a world-wide scale. Its prediction grew out of the logic of an interpretation of events in which capital would become concentrated in the hands of a few resulting in the creation of two unequal classes. The first class, the great masses of downtrodden workers would unite and overthrow the second, the small, elite group of owners. The workers would seize the means of production and rule in a classless society. After an interim period of Communism, an ideal society of Socialism would evolve which would be ordered by the principle: From each according to his ability, to each according to his need. Socialist philosophy underwent many transformations as it was adapted to different countries; adaptation to the soil of American social thought was no exception.

American Socialism embodied two distinct wings. The Anarchist wing "called for 'destruction of the existing class rule' by whatever means necessary . . . [and] demanded the establishment of 'a free society based upon cooperative organization of production, free exchange without profit, complete equality of the sexes, and entire freedom of control'" (Hopkins, 1940:68). The more conservative wing, the Socialist Labor party, was the larger and dominant group within Socialism (Hopkins, 1940:68). Hopkins describes its platform in the following way:

> It based it beliefs upon the labor theory of value and asserted that 'a just and equitable distribution of the fruits of labor is utterly

> impossible under the present system of society.' Competition. . . results in monopoly. To abolish existing conditions the party held that 'land, the means of production, public transportation and the means of exchange must be socialized.' The Socialist Labor party proposed to accomplish these aims by means of the ballot; it substituted evolution for revolution, and peaceful agitation for violence (1940:68-69).

Socialism was never a part of the mainstream of American political or religious life.[15] It was not a factor in the thinking of even the most socially conscious clergy until the 1890's.[16] In the popular mind, it was identified with anarchism, the abolition of private property and the destruction of the family (Fishburn, 1981:112).[17] Little organized by 1880, the irrational fears it aroused were a result of the belief that the newly formed labor unions were dominated by it (Hopkins, 1940:69).[18] In general however it was regarded as a result of the social crisis. C.H. Hopkins says:

> Many clergymen regarded Socialism as the immediate fruitage of American social and industrial conditions in the gilded age. The fundamental cause of this situation was held to be the enormous increase of wealth brought about by the industrial revolution, a process that, goaded by an exaggerated individualism, [was] careless of natural resources. . . [and] resulted. . . in overproduction. . . [and] antagonistic classes separated by an ever-widening gulf. . . . Worse still, such concentration [of wealth] was followed by 'selfish, conscienceless use,' waste, extravagance, luxury, and utter lack of regard for public welfare. . . (1940:71).

Although the labor parties and a few socially conscious clergymen openly embraced Socialism, in the 1880's the solution to the poverty of the working class was not sought in Socialism. It was sought in more modest means of reform. H.H. Quint outlines the more conservative proposals for change offered by a conscientious clergy. He says:

> In the mood of reform rather than revolution, they proposed various means for the fulfillment of this need: greater church attention to and sympathy with trade unions and with the problems of the wage-earning class; encouragement of cooperation and profit-sharing; more extensive social and economic planning by the State; and determined efforts to blunt class antagonisms by a heightened sense of social responsibility on the part of the possessing class (1953:106-107).

These moderate proposals should be seen in the context of the fears and objections of those who rejected Socialism in the 1880's. For those who feared Socialism there were economic, political and religious reasons for the rejection of Socialism. Economically, it was feared that Socialism would abolish private property. Further, its labor theory of value was held to be inadequate; that is, elements beyond labor such as materials, tools, management and markets were held to be of equal or greater capital value (Hopkins, 1940:73). Politically, the "socialization of land, resources, capital and means of production seemed an unwarranted centralization of power" (Hopkins, 1940:73). Religiously, Socialism was rejected as atheistic. The greatest popular fear of Socialism was the possibility of the absorption of the individual by the state and the loss of personal freedom and property. H.H. Quint summarizes the objections to Socialism in the late 1880's:

> The objections raised against Socialism were essentially those which had already become traditional: the dwarfing of an individual in a society dedicated to equality, the immorality of the class-struggle thesis, the atheism and the materialism of Marxism, the economic fallacy of the surplus-value theory, the concentration of oppressive power in the state, and the delusion of seeking regeneration through society as a whole rather than through the individual (1953:106).

By the 1890's, however, there was some change in the attitude toward Socialism, especially among progressively minded clergy. Socialism's aims and programs were examined with less hostility and a number of clergymen embraced aspects of Socialist philosophy as a means to a more just social order (Hopkins, 1940:171).[19] The growing social consciousness of the time in general supported the more sympathetic look at Socialism. C.H. Hopkins points out:

> This phenomenon [a more sympathetic look at socially progressive philosophies] was an integral part of the strivings of an age believing in evolution, in an organic society and in social salvation, and that was coming to appreciate the significance of environment and the power of organization (1940:70).

With the spirit of the age, there occurred an adaptation of Socialist principles to a Christian framework, which, in James Dombrowski's view, led to a form of Socialism which was progressive and evolutionary rather than radical and revolutionary. Dombrowski says of this Christianized Socialism:

> Among Christian Socialists the concept of gradualism had the effect of toning down the idea of Socialism until it meant little more than a vague and organic unity of the race. Under this interpretation of the term anyone who granted the validity of some measure of interdependence and mutual obligation among men might call himself a Socialist. . . . Under this conception every slight gain in working conditions . . . was heralded as a step toward the Kingdom of God. . . . 'Socialists,' wrote Philo W. Sprague, 'are more evolutionists than revolutionists' (1936:26).[20]

Christian Socialism was an adaptation of Marxist Socialism. Christian Socialism is characterized by H.H. Quint as a Socialism that was Socialist in its collectivism but Christian in its values (1953:107). Christian Socialists "proposed to give society a social and economic ethic based upon the Sermon on the Mount" (Quint, 1953:107). Unlike Marxist Socialism, the Socialism fashioned by Christian clergymen was seen as a means to a more just social order rather than as a specific order to be established as an end in itself. Christian Socialism retained a foundation in Christian values and the teachings of Christ.[21] C.H. Hopkins characterizes the appropriation of Socialism by the Christian clergy as the appropriation of collectivism:

> Perhaps the most realistic note of Christian Socialism was the acceptance of the familiar Socialist critique of Capitalism. . . . Collectivism would provide the economic basis for a fuller individual and social life and would make possible obedience to Christ in the business world (1940:170).

Because of its Christianization, Socialism gained some hearing even among the more conservative clergy after 1890. H.H. Quint describes the role of Christian Socialists in their efforts to baptize a fundamentally revolutionary, atheistic European import:

> The duty of Christian Socialists was to prove that Socialism and Christianity were fundamentally compatible, and then to make the church the leader in the establishment of a new social and socialist order grounded on Christ's teachings (1953:113).

The 1890's saw the rise of a number of significant Christian Socialist preachers and activists who "preached the gospel of a new order that would be socialistic in its organic collectivism and Christian in its spiritual values" (Quint,

1953:107). The two most significant figures of this period were W.D.P. Bliss and George D. Herron. Between 1889 and 1896, Bliss was the principal spokesperson for those who formed a Christian Socialist clergy. Quint characterizes his Socialism as one permeated by gradualism, the understanding of humanity as a brotherhood and society as an organic whole, and the denial of a class struggle thesis (1953:126).[22]

George D. Herron, on the other hand, challenged the church not to reform but to reconstruct society in accordance with the standards of Jesus (Hopkins-White, 1976:171). The competitive laws of a capitalist society which led to the centralization of wealth and industrial despotism created poverty and discordance; competition was not an economic law but anarchism and the manifestation of selfishness in societal principles which led to disintegration (Hopkins-White, 1976:172). The connection between Christianity and Socialism, for Herron, was the understanding that "every religious and political question is fundamentally economic" (Hopkins-White, 1976:173). Spiritual life flourished only when material life was organized to allow for equal opportunity provided by social justice (Hopkins-White, 1976:173). Although Socialism was originally grounded on materialism, like Christianity, its ends were spiritual (Quint, 1953:136). The driving forces of the universe, according to Herron, were sacrificial and redemptive (Hopkins-White, 1976:173), and a rational civilization sought "not the so-called survival of the fittest, but the fittingness of all to worthily survive" (Quint, 1953:136). Herron accepted the inevitability of the class struggle but was careful to distinguish between class consciousness and class hatred (Quint, 1953:135). In the end, individualism could only be realized in social collectivism; brotherhood and equality were possible so long as the competition of capitalism was completely replaced by a collectivism, the only political means of realizing the law of Christ in the world. The historian J. Dombrowski characterizes Herron as one who "saw most clearly the nature of the problem involved in social change" (1936:29). For Dombrowski:

> The merit of his position was that he saw with clear insight how economics conditioned ethical attitudes. . . . The primary task of religion, he wrote, was to revolutionize that economic base of society. . . . The economic structure within which these activities operated, must be changed. The drive for private profits must be replaced by concern for the welfare of the entire body of workers; then the premium now placed on the acquisitive anti-social traits of human nature would give way to mass approval of social tendencies in society (1936:30).[23]

The period of the 1890's was the high watermark of Christian Socialism in the nineteenth century, particularly in the able voices of Bliss and Herron. However according to Hopkins, compared with the Christian Socialism of the first decade of the twentieth century, in which left wing Christian Socialism became "both Marxist and political" (Hopkins, 1940:233), the Christian Socialism of the 1890's was "utopian" and, practically speaking, "little more than a minority emphasis upon the social aspects of Christianity" (1940:233).

It was during the decade of the 1890's that Rauschenbusch came into contact with Socialism.[24] Rauschenbusch certainly may be characterized as a Christian Socialist.[25] His Socialism is described by Robert Handy as "evolutionary," "non-doctrinaire" and "non-political" (Handy, 1966:262). Rauschenbusch never belonged to the Socialist party[26] and he had strong reservations concerning Marxist Socialism. In "Ideas of the Social Reformers" (1896) he lists five dangers he considers inherent to Marxist Socialism. First, although he understands capitalistic individualism to contain an unfair notion of individuality, implying a race between those "on horseback" and those "on foot", he does not approve of the Socialist organization of the nation, for it proves a threat to personal liberty (211). Second, he fears that the stability and importance of the family would be threatened in the Socialist system (212). Third, he is concerned that the identity of the country would be subsumed under Socialism (215). Fourth, he opposes the Socialist requirement of a revolutionary break with the existing order, especially by violence. Finally, he argues that the materialism of orthodox Socialism requires only the production and regulation of more goods when more justice and equality are required; without a basis in justice and morality, prosperity in production becomes a curse (218). Rauschenbusch's concerns were with the atheism of Socialism, its organization, its violence and its materialism. Dores Sharpe says of Rauschenbusch's position on Marxist Socialism that,

> . . . he opposed the materialism and atheism which accompanied Marxism, and he was fearful that the time might come when a sudden revolution would bring Socialism on a people unprepared for it, without spiritual backing for it, and under the control of leaders untrained in governmental affairs (1942:9). . . he did not believe in the Marxian revolutionary cataclysmic approach; he was not for the socialization of everything. . . (1942:200).

Rauschenbusch differentiated Marxist Socialism from Christian Socialism. In an article entitled "Christian Socialism," published posthumously in *A Dictionary of Religion* (1921), Rauschenbusch characterizes Christian Socialism as a philosophy which creates a "distinctive consciousness" and is a "peculiar genus of Socialism." Because of its belief in the "social redemption of the race through Christ," it imbues Socialism with a "religious quality" (91). Christian Socialism is distinctive, for Rauschenbusch, for a number of reasons: it sets a positive religious faith against a materialistic philosophy; it believes in the value of the church; it stresses religious regeneration as an ingredient in the reorganization of society; it accepts economic determinism and the influence of social environment, while asserting the reality of spiritual forces and individual moral responsibility; and it stands for the sanctity of the family and the Christian attitude toward intoxicants (91).

Like other Christian Socialists, Rauschenbusch appropriated certain aspects of Socialist thought into his Christian framework. He was certainly influenced by Marxist social analysis vis-a-vis its interpretation of the determinative role of the socio-economic order for individual life. Most significant for Rauschenbusch however was the principle of association or solidarity, expressed in Marxist terms as the association of the workers or class solidarity by which the workers were empowered for revolution and the establishment of a just social order. In "Ideals of the Social Reformers" (1896), Rauschenbusch argues that because the call for the workers to unite transcends national boundaries it makes for an international association or solidarity of human life. Rauschenbusch says:

> I know of only two forces that are really making for international fellowship with fairly unselfish motives. The one is the social movement. It is international in its tendencies. Karl Marx: 'Proletarians of all nations unite.' The tendency to international solidarity is as yet but rudimentary, but it has been strong enough to send many thousands of dollars across the seas to aid in social struggles. . . . The other force making in the same direction is the foreign missions (208).

It was the principle of solidarity, fundamental to Marxist strategy, that Rauschenbusch adapted for his own social thinking and took to be determinative for the development of a cooperative social order of justice and love. According to Rauschenbusch:

> A. . . great ideal at work in the social movement lies in the principle of association . . . The development since the French Revolution, or

> rather since the Protestant Reformation, has been toward the enfranchisement of the individual. . . . The next great word, as Mazzini says, is association. . . . Now men are free but it is often the freedom of grains of sand that are whirled up in a cloud and dropped in a heap, but neither cloud nor sand heap have any coherence. This condition is not a final one. New forms of association must be created. Our disorganized and competitive life must pass into an organic cooperative life. We all know this is one of the great ideas of the social movement. Men may differ about the extent to which the socializing process ought to go and about the. . . formula according to which the two ingredients of individualism and socialism are to be mixed, but the new ingredient will have to go in (209).

The socio-political principle of solidarity at the heart of Socialism, according to Rauschenbusch, was wholly in accord with the Christian imperative to love. Insofar as Socialism attempted to translate the human and Christian tendency toward association and unity into socio-economic structures of collective and cooperative ownership, Socialism had a right to the support of all.[27] Rauschenbusch concludes:

> True Christianity emphasizes. . . the value of the individual. . . But it contains more than individualism: it also contains the principle of association and implants the trustworthiness, love and unselfishness which cement men together and make association a workable idea. Insofar. . . as Socialism is the effort to translate into facts of political economy the Christian tendency to association. . . it has a right to claim our approval (209).

Rauschenbusch understood Socialism's arrival in the social order to be inevitable (Sharpe, 1942:219). In his article "Practical Measures of Socialism" he says:

> Socialism is coming. Evolutionary science, the modern study of history, the logic of political democracy, the practical lessons taught by corporations and trusts, the universal tendency toward industrial combination, and -- by no means least -- the new conception of Christian brotherhood that is awakening in our hearts, all these are silently urging us toward Socialism (1901:710).

However, rather than a violent break with the existing social order through revolution, Rauschenbusch counselled a steady, gradual evolution toward Socialism in which its "excrescences" would drop off and the entire nation could

be behind it; it would not be a "class movement, but a movement of the people" ("Social Awakening of the Churches," 1911:567). Toward this end, Rauschenbusch advocated a steady growth of collective ownership and cooperative economic measures throughout society. He believed that "the more slowly and steadily competitive society can be woven through with little fibres and ligaments of cooperation, the more people learn to work together for the common good and to subordinate their private greed and ambition. . . to the general welfare, the more chance the great system of Socialism will have to get into working order and. . . to stay in order instead of falling to pieces by its own weight" (1901:713). Specifically, Rauschenbusch recommended 1) appropriation of economic rent by taxation of ground values, 2) municipal ownership of natural resources and monopolies, 3) municipal ownership of express, telegraph and post office, 4) application of income from these sources to education and public welfare, 5) graduated inheritance tax, 6) strengthening labor organization, and 7) labor legislation designed to shorten working time and improve the conditions of labor as a whole ("Socialism Is of Two Kinds," 1901:92).

Although Rauschenbusch rejected the atheism, materialism and catastrophism of Marxist Socialism, he affirmed the principles of solidarity he took to be at the heart of the movement. He believed its economic program of collective ownership to be a significant step in the direction of a just society. Rauschenbusch desired that Socialism's advance be gradual, evolving peacefully with the support of the whole nation rather than violently by a single class unprepared for leadership or governance in the name of the common good. Rauschenbusch appropriated Socialist analysis into his thinking and writing insofar as that philosophy was motivated by and sought to establish the principle of solidarity.

According to C.H. Hopkins, not only from the perspective of Rauschenbusch's work, but from the larger perspective of nineteenth century Protestantism as a whole, Socialism was that philosophy most influential in the socialization of the American churches. Hopkins says:

> . . . no single force so stung American Protestantism into social action as did this gadfly of capitalism. From the rude jolt it gave some of the pioneers of the 1870's, to its integral place in the theology of Walter Rauschenbusch, socialism was a factor of primary importance in the socializing of Christianity (1940:244).

As a footnote to our examination of Socialism as a medium for a vision of a revised social order in the thinking and work of Rauschenbusch, a word may be

said about social Progressivism, a liberal, political movement which also influenced Rauschenbusch and aided in the socialization of the American churches. C.H. Hopkins says that if "[Socialism's]. . . influence upon the socializing of American Protestantism was incalculable, . . . the true political vehicle of the social gospel was to be progressivism" (1940:178). Progressivism was considered by some as a form of Socialism. Janet Fishburn points out that "For some, progressivism was a constructive form of Socialism, seeking the limited objectives of public ownership of utilities and home rule for local and city government (1981:112). In reality, Progressivism was largely legislation initiated by Theodore Roosevelt in an effort to create equal opportunity for all (Fishburn, 1981:113). Unlike Socialism, Progressivism was less a philosophy than a practical movement for social reform. W.S. Hudson characterizes it as a "miscellaneous collection of reforms" (1961:315-316). C.H. Hopkins lists the reforms to which Progressivism was committed: "The direct primary, woman suffrage, the initiative, referendum, and recall, . . . reform in the establishment of the Federal Reserve system, the income tax amendment, . . . the tightening of the Interstate Commerce Commission's control of railroads, and the assumption of the policy of public ownership of unexploited forests" (1940:203).[28]

Progressivism can also be considered an attitude of optimism and reform which pervaded the thinking of the country from the turn of the century to World War I. It was this attitude of optimism and reform that shaped and, in turn, was shaped by the religious commitment to social reform. F.M. Szasz says:

> . . . the cement that held the numerous programs together was the Protestant mood. . . of moral commitment to social causes. From 1901 to 1917. . . religious metaphors provided the essential framework for Progressive thought. A direct connection existed between American Protestantism and the rise of American Progressivism. The vitality of the churches from 1901 to 1917 was integral to the reform movement (1947:43).

Concomitant with the development of Progressivism was the growth of the social sciences. Sociology in the late nineteenth century was a developing science which created a group of professional social workers to investigate the sources of poverty and destitution in the urban centers throughout the country. Szasz says: "much of the strength of the Progressive movement came from these scientific professionals, who might well be termed the 'head' of the movement" (1947:43). The growth of the social sciences and a Christian sociology marked a maturation in Social Christianity and welfare programs in general. The developing social

sciences provided a realistic perspective on the social problems of the age as well as a new perspective for theology. Albion Small, a pioneer of the sociological method and the first to establish a chair in the discipline, speaks of a new relationship between theology and the social sciences:

> . . . the most earnest seekers after God are . . . growing more and more in contact with the development of a science. . . of God's image, or the science of human welfare. . . The ultimate value of sociology as pure science will be its use as an index and a test and a measure of what is worth doing (Quoted in Ahlstrom, 1972:798).

Central to Progressivism and the social sciences was the realization of the interconnectedness of all society. F.M. Szasz says that "The Progressives were the first generation of Americans to realize one of the major themes of. . . society: that all aspects of American life have become interrelated" (1947:45). Szasz points to the rapid development of technology as well as the growing popularization of biological evolution as contributive factors to a new understanding of society as a solidaristic whole. He says:

> The rapid changes in thought and technology had developed a unity never before realized. The popularity of biology provided a new metaphor: Society was an organism. Everything was related to everything else (1947:45).

Rauschenbusch was clearly influenced by Progressivism and the insights of the social sciences of his day. The principle of the interrelatedness of all aspects of society played a determinative role in his social ethics. Like Progressivism, the theory of biological evolution, specifically Darwinism, contributed to Rauschenbusch's understanding of society as an organic whole and human life as interdependent and solidaristic. Although Darwinism was concerned with the biological evolution of life, its implications for the social order of the late nineteenth century were significant. We pass now to a consideration of Darwinism and its influence on the social perspective of Rauschenbusch.

Rauschenbusch and Darwinian Evolution

Darwinism had an impact on many aspects of the intellectual and social life of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[29] Dores Sharpe describes the pervasiveness of its influence when he says:

> Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) dramatized evolution in the realm of biology, but the evolutionary conception spread far more widely and deeply than that. The idea of evolutionary change came to be applied to everything. It was the dominant intellectual concept of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first part of the present one. . . . mankind broke away from its age long conception of a static universe, and adopted a philosophy of continuous change (1942:5).

Although Darwin's work and thought exerted widespread influence on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,[30] there existed a problem at the heart of Darwinian theory for American thought, particularly Christianity, which made its reconciliation with American social philosophy and the Christian tradition problematic, if not impossible. The problem was a result of the fact that evolution, as Darwin understood it, did not include the idea of progress. Natural selection, that phenomenon which shaped and moved the process of evolution was, for Darwin, a random, non-teleological process. Evolution without a teleology, lacking the implication of progress, was alien to the American spirit of the nineteenth century. Stow Persons says that, in the nineteenth century, "the identification of evolution with progress in every sense was a well-nigh universal characteristic of evolutionary theism" (1950:434). Not only theists, but the scientists of the age interpreted evolution in terms of progress. Nelson Burr points out that, "It should be observed in fairness to all of those who sought comfort in a teleological version of 'development' that in the generation following Darwin the scientists themselves were all too prone to equate evolution with development" (1961:377). If natural selection was the unique contribution of Darwinism, it was also its stumbling block, at least for the American mind. Because evolution proceeded by "accidental conjuncture" of circumstances, it remained alien from the creed of progress, by which the nineteenth century lived. P.F. Boller says:

> The concept of natural selection was the most original feature of Darwin's work and it was a tremendous contribution to the advance of scientific understanding.
>
> . . .
>
> Darwinism itself not only meant evolutionary change; it meant evolutionary change without plan or purpose. The principle of natural selection. . . removed all teleological elements from organic development. For the strict Darwinist, evolutionary development was a purely mechanical process in which chance (the accidental conjuncture of individual variations and environmental conditions) played the crucial role (1969:12).

The Darwinian understanding of natural selection not only struck at the heart of the nineteenth century's belief in progress, but, equally significantly, at the Deistic notion of a supernatural design for the universe. Janet Fishburn explains that, although the evolutionary theory left intact the possibility for a first cause, "the doctrine of natural selection provoked an even stronger reaction because it suggested that there was no ultimate purpose or design in the universe or in man" (1981:48). P.F. Boller points out that:

> Asa Gray did in fact labor to establish a foundation for theism in the principle of evolutionary sequence. His method was to equate the operation of natural selection with teleology, thus substituting. . . what might be called supernatural selection for Darwin's principle (1969:9).

In the end. . . Darwin and Gray came to a parting of the ways (1969:11). Stow Persons elaborates on Gray's early and unsuccessful attempt to reconcile the Darwinian position on natural selection with Deism. Persons says:

> Asa Gray, the Harvard botanist who was the most influential apologist for Darwin in the American religious community, had attempted to reconcile supernatural design with natural selection by assuring believers that the beneficial intentions of deity could be realized as effectively through natural selection as by more spectacular methods. In repudiating Gray, Charles Hodge, professor at Princeton and leading conservative Presbyterian theologian, was supported by Darwin himself, who could find no evidence of teleology in the selective process. . . . Although adaptation might have the appearance of design, Darwin was too careful an observer to make the identification that was all too common among his more superficial disciples (1950:426).

Without a teleology, the evolutionary process seemed amoral and devoid of priorities which could define the process as progress. Chance, not progress, was the centerpiece which controlled the process. John Greene summarizes the problem at the heart of the theory of Darwinian evolution, for many, when he says:

> The difficulty was that biology afforded no criteria for judging the progress of a creature like man. Survival was a precondition of progress, but it did not insure progress or define its essence. In the last analysis natural selection meant not the survival. . . [of the fittest or best] but the survival of those who survived. Survival was a brute fact, not a moral victory (1959:335).

Orthodox Darwinism posed even greater problems for American Christianity. It challenged the nature of human origins as Christians understood them; it invalidated a biblical interpretation of creation; and, because of its exclusive emphasis on the physical generation of species, it seemed to be a denial of the presence of a human soul or a spiritual dimension for the human person. The history of American Christianity at this time is in large part a record of the struggles of Christian theology to come to terms with the challenges posed for it by Darwinism. The lack of a teleology, guaranteeing a purposive creation was, for Christianity, Darwinian theory's greatest stumbling block, as it was for American thinking in general. Devoid of a teleology which implied progress and a purposive creation, Darwinian evolution seemed an absurd notion to American social thought and Christianity alike. Clearly, Darwinism needed baptism through a reinterpretation before its integration into American social and Christian thinking would be possible. Paul Boller explains that:

> In this form evolution was hardly acceptable to most Americans, not even scientists (1969:12).
>
> . . .
>
> While there is no question that the concept of evolutionary change had won almost complete acceptance among American scientists. . . it was quite otherwise with the concept of natural selection. Until the end of the century. . . natural selection itself was rarely accepted without being wedded to a teleological point of view (1969:20).
>
> . . .
>
> For religiously oriented Americans, scientists and laymen alike, . . . it threatened to replace design with disorder and the absolute with the absurd (1969:21).

The infusion of Darwinism with a teleological point of view and the idea of progress was effected in the late nineteenth century by theologians and scientists alike. The evolutionary focus changed from the biological arena to the historical arena. If the biological study of survival could provide no criteria for measuring progress, history could provide the criteria for progress in the study of civilizations. History became the record of a progressive evolution to what was considered the superior civilization of the present, a democratic, Christian nation. Janet Fishburn explains:

> The evolutionary theologians shifted the evidence of nature to the arena of history and looked for evidence of human progress in the increasing prosperity and morality they believed signified an almost Christianized nation. . . . The Social Gospel men were part of a general shift in the method of theology to the 'new' evolutionary interpretation of history as their defense against Darwinism (1981:49).

History rather than nature offered proof that evolution was progressive and teleological. Within history an unfolding plan could be discerned. God was introduced into the process. Christian evolution held to the idea of God immanent in history. With the idea of God immanent history, evolution became thoroughly Christianized. In fact, the idea of God immanent in history Christianized the very idea of progress itself. Sidney Mead says: "It was evolutionary theories, sanctified by the traditional Christian doctrine of Providence, which spawned the general idea of 'progress'. . ." (1963:169). Nelson Burr points out the results of theology's reconstruction of naturalistic Darwinism in teleological and moral terms. He says:

> . . . the view of history as constituting a social evolutionary development was taken over from naturalism and recast in terms consistent with a moralized and humanized theology (1961:384).
> . . .
> Nature's method was now understood to be that of 'development,' a term with which evolution was commonly equated, and which implied progressive improvement (1965:388).

God immanent in history, unfolding a progressive plan with a teleology identifiable as the Kingdom constituted liberal theology's baptism of orthodox Darwinism. Stow Persons says: "Divine immanence was confirmed as the vital theological doctrine of the new faith" (1950:447).

It was but one logical step from the idea of the immanence of God in history to the idea of the solidarity of humankind and the organicity of society. Darwinism itself held to the solidarity and organicity of all life. But, in the Christianized version of evolution, the immanence of God implied the unity of the race and, conversely, the unity of the race implied the immanence of God. Rauschenbusch points out: "The conception of the unity of life makes it possible to think of history as the unfolding of the purpose of the immanent God, who is working in the race toward the commonwealth of spiritual liberty and righteousness" (CSO, 1912:161). History's foundation in God implied the solidarity and unity of humankind, as humankind's unity made it possible to think of God as immanent in history itself.

If Darwinian evolution was recast in Christian terms, it was also recast and reinterpreted in social terms. The understanding of society that resulted from the influence of evolutionary thinking on Social Christianity has been summed up by C.H. Hopkins. According to Hopkins, three theses of a Christianized evolution provided a unified framework for Christian social thought at this time. The theses were: the immanence of God in history, the organicity or solidarity of humankind, and the beginnings of the kingdom of God on earth (1940:123). The implications of these tenets were significant for Christian social thought.[31]

The belief in a God immanent in the historical process broke down the old dualism of Christianity between the sacred and the secular (Hopkins, 1940:123). As Visser t' Hooft points out, the breaking down of the old dualism "makes concern with the material world as much of a Christian duty as concern with the spiritual, because there is no essential opposition between the two" (1928:161). Further, the idea of God immanent in history "reinforced the organic bonds integrating the individual with society" (Hopkins, 1940:124).

The solidarity of the human race or "the vital unity of the race" established by the "indwelling of the divine Father in all men," (Hopkins, 1940:125) implied that the social sciences themselves had meaning and should be applied to society and the individual in his/her material as well as spiritual situation. Human relations were not isolated and "contractual" but grounded in the organic and solidaristic nature of human existence and society. Reporting on Washington Gladden's understanding of the solidarity of humankind, Hopkins says:

> The organic idea has been present in Christianity since the writing of St. Paul's epistles, Gladden said [in his *Ruling Ideas*], but it has been narrowly construed to mean only the church. In reality the relations of men in society are not contractual, but 'vital and organic.' We are

> members one of another. No man lives or dies or attains happiness apart from his fellow men (1940:125).

Finally, the kingdom of God begun within history became the teleology of history and the life of the race. It was "the inclusive religious and social goal toward which these conceptions all pointed. . ." (Hopkins, 1940:127). Hopkins calls the kingdom of God, in this framework, a "religious version of evolution" (1940:127). No longer only a spiritual goal, the kingdom was now a social, historical goal with an "ethical nature," that was to be initiated within present history, and provide the religious foundation for social change. The tenets of the immanence of God in history, the solidarity of humankind and the teleology of the kingdom begun in history became the foundation of Social Christianity and had profound implications for its vision of a regenerated social order.

In its reinterpretation of evolution, Social Christianity rejected another interpretation of evolution which was expressed in the socio-economic theory known as Social Darwinism. William Graham Sumner, the American apostle of the British Darwinist, Herbert Spencer, interpreted Darwinian "survival of the fittest" in terms of laissez-faire economics. Sumner argued that if the ablest and most fit were destined to survive, any form of state intervention, welfare or aid for the needy only interrupted the evolution toward the survival of the strong and the able. Richard Hofstadter points out that "the pioneers of the social gospel departed from the prevailing social uses of evolution: they detested and feared the. . . competitive order and all its works" (1945:108).[32]

For Sumner, the competitive struggle was the necessary step to the goal of a perfect society, i.e., a social order based solely on contract: "For him the system of free contract toward which society was evolving was the final goal" (Everett, 1946:13). Sumner ruled out all metaphysical or ethical considerations from his theory because neither metaphysics nor ethics could be tested by the scientific method. Interference with the laissez-faire system through charity, aid or state intervention only slowed the inevitable process of evolution toward a society of the strong. Sumner counselled:

> The drunk should be left in the gutter; he belongs there, and nature's laws will dispose of him in due time. Men should not be constantly interfering with the operation of nature's evolutionary laws, since nature is so well-balanced that even the slightest refraction of the rules will cause repercussions of disharmony throughout the entire social structure (Everett, 1946:16).

Sumner made the evolutionary process all inclusive. Social survival through competition was just as much a part of the evolutionary process as was the biological "survival of the fittest." All social questions were fitted into the framework of survival through competitive struggle. Although Sumner, and Spencer like him, were Darwinian evolutionists, unlike Darwin, their evolutionary theory was teleological; their process issued in a society of contractual relations in which only the strongest and most competitive survived.

The Gospel of Wealth, a philosophy popular at this time, was not as self-consciously doctrinaire as that of Sumner and his school, but the implication of its social views was not far removed from those of the Social Darwinists. Rooted in the philosophy of the Deists, which held that one should produce with energy and consume sparingly, and the Puritan ethic of work and thrift, the Gospel of Wealth differed little from Social Darwinism (Gabriel, 1940:159, 166). For those who espoused the Gospel of Wealth,[33] competition and the wealth attained thereby evidenced not only those who were most fit to survive, but also those who were most "God-fearing" and thereby blessed by God with success. One historian of the period points to Bishop Lawrence, an Episcopal bishop of Massachusetts, as an example of one who had perfected and modernized the formula of the Gospel of Wealth for the twentieth century. Summarized by R.H. Gabriel, Bishop Lawrence believed that:

> To acquire material wealth is natural and necessary. . . 'In the long run, it is only to the men of morality that wealth comes. . . . Material prosperity is helping to make the national character sweeter, more joyous, more unselfish, more Christlike' (1940:60).

For adherents of the Gospel of Wealth, "Poverty. . . springs from laziness, lack of thrift, vice and sometimes misfortune" (Gabriel, 1940:61). When aid was offered to those in need, their poverty was treated on an individual basis. David Noble says that poverty in this context took on both a moral and biological explanation. Morally and biologically, the poor were being punished for their sinfulness and weakness. Noble explains that,

> More and more frequently throughout the nineteenth century poverty was explained as moral weakness that reflected biological weakness. . . . the rationalization for withholding aid to the poor had become twofold. In theological terms, the poor were being punished by God for their sins, and in biological terms they were being punished for their failure to embody the strength of the race (1970:72).

This perspective assumed the absolute freedom of the individual over society and social conditions; it glorified the ruggedness of individualism and supposed that survival and success should go to the strongest and swiftest (Gabriel, 1940:66). For its adherents, the state existed only to maintain order and protect the absolute right to private property (Gabriel, 1940:67). Individual charity and the stewardship of the rich was thought to insure stability between the classes. In the end, it was believed that the rich, by individual acts of charity, could temporarily do for the poor what the poor could not do for themselves. The Gospel of Wealth viewed poverty as an individual and temporary condition. Gabriel says:

> Poverty should be for the individual a temporary status. With initiative, industry, and ability he should rise above it. For the masses who do not rise, poverty must be a badge of failure proclaiming that the individual is defective in capacity or morals or both (Gabriel, 1940:67).

Social gospelers and social progressives alike protested the logic of Social Darwinism. A major voice of social Progressivism at this time was Lester Frank Ward. His criticism of Social Darwinism and its related philosophies was lifelong and intense. The center of his argument focused on what he took to be Social Darwinism's confusion of social evolution with biological evolution (Boller, 1969:65-66). For Ward, nature may proceed blindly but humankind and society has always proceeded by plan and purpose. He argued,

> We are told to let things alone, and allow nature to take its course. But has intelligent man ever done this? Is not civilization. . . the result of man's not letting things alone, and of his not letting nature take its course? (Quoted in Boller, 1969:66).

For Ward, human action was purposive and as such distinguishable from biological processes. Social engineering was always a part of the telic process of civilizations. Sydney Ahlstrom points out that, "[Ward]. . . attacked the Social Darwinists who used evolutionary theory to support the business man's opposition to state intervention, charity, and all other 'artificial' devices to preserve the 'unfit' in the economic struggle for survival" (1972:793). Ward believed that sociology was an applied science for the betterment of society. Modified environmental choices, not random biological selection, determined survival in a way fitting for all. Thus Ward could say that "the 'denizens of the slums'. . . are

potentially the intellectual equals of the graduates of Harvard; they lack only the opportunities for education which would bring their natural talents to the fore" (Paraphrased in Boller, 1969:68-69).

Eventually, through the criticism and agitation of Ward and others like him, governmental intervention in the form of laws and legislation regulating businesses and creating programs for the needy came to be enacted and implemented. The positive nature of state intervention was expressed by Walter Lippman when he said:

> We can no longer treat life as something that has trickled down to us. We have to deal with it deliberately, devise its social organization, alter its tools, formulate its method, educate and control it. In endless ways we put intention where custom has reigned. We break up routines, make decisions, choose our ends, select our means (Quoted in Hofstadter, 1945:122).

By the beginning of the twentieth century the unrestricted competition of the nineteenth century was coming to an end and there was a shift toward cautious government regulation on the rewards of unlimited capitalism. Richard Hofstadter summarizes the shift at the turn of the century:

> If no utopia was in the making, at least there was a shift away from the free competitive order. The material basis of the Spencer-Sumner ideology was being transformed and the lines of social argument were pushing on. The relatively untrammeled capitalism of the nineteenth century was beginning to change into the welfare capitalism of the twentieth; the frustration of the middle class and the needs of the poor were accelerating the change (1945:119).[34]

Rauschenbusch encountered Darwinian evolution as early as 1883.[35] As with his appropriation of Socialist thought, he selectively integrated it into his developing social perspective. He was certainly a Christian evolutionist. One critic has pointed out that, "In the corpus of Rauschenbusch's work the immanence of God is explicit, the solidarity of humankind pronounced, and the notion of a progressive Kingdom of God most exact" (Davis, 1978:257). Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the Kingdom of God, a doctrine central to his theology, clearly incorporates the evolutionary concept. Rauschenbusch himself says: "Translate the evolutionary theories into religious faith, and you have the doctrine of the Kingdom of God" (CSC, 1912:90). Sharpe characterized the work of Rauschenbusch as one permeated by evolutionary thought. Sharpe says:

> This new idea was grasped by Rauschenbusch and applied to history, politics, scientific theory, social patterns, ethics, religion, personal development (1942:5).

Although an evolutionary perspective permeated his work, it was a qualified evolutionary perspective. He interpreted God's relation to history as immanental, but he also understood God as transcendent. He qualified the notion of progress at the heart of Christian evolution. For Rauschenbusch, the progress of history toward its goal was neither automatic nor without hindrance. He envisioned many setbacks in history's evolution toward the kingdom, for good was always in conflict with human evil and sin. For Rauschenbusch, "However evolution may work in the rest of creation, a new element enters in when it reaches the ethical nature of man" (Quoted in Davis, 1978:268). If Rauschenbusch envisioned developing stages in civilization and history from an old order of feudalism, to the present order of capitalism, and onto a future order of cooperative or socialistic society, all evolving to the beginnings of the kingdom on earth, he was also keenly aware of the demise of civilizations. Davis says: "Rauschenbusch applies the principle of the possibilities of evolution to human history and is forced to conclude from the evidence concerning the rise and fall of civilizations that ascendance and degeneration may be the natural course of humankind" (1978:268). In *Christianity and the Social Crisis* Rauschenbusch says:

> History laughs at the optimistic illusion that 'nothing can stand in the way of human progress.' It would be safer to assert that progress is always for a time only, and then succumbs to the inevitable decay (1907:318).

Although Rauschenbusch understood progress as a divine as well as human activity, he never interpreted it as either uninterrupted or inevitable.

If Rauschenbusch modified the Christian evolutionary notions of the immanence of God and the idea of progress, he embraced the notion of human solidarity, central to the idea of evolution, particularly Darwinian evolution, without reservation. He was influenced positively by evolutionary thought in the notion of the solidarity of all humankind. Rauschenbusch in fact understood the oneness of life and humankind to imply the very notion of God's immanence in history. Quoted earlier, in *Christianizing the Social Order*, Rauschenbusch says:

"The conception of the unity of life makes it possible to think of history as the unfolding of the purpose of the immanent God" (1912:161).

In his rejection of the Social Darwinists' theory of the inevitability of the survival of the fittest and its application to the social and economic orders, Rauschenbusch's appropriation of solidarity is clearly evidenced.[36] He eschews any idea of the competitive struggle as a step toward an ideal society and claims rather that the next step of the evolutionary process is one of cooperation and collectivism.[37] In *Christianity and the Social Crisis* Rauschenbusch speaks of the possibility of the failure of the church to bring the business order under the law of solidarity and service. According to Rauschenbusch, if the church fails to bring the economic order under the law of Christ, it will tragically give justification to the Social Darwinists and their theory of competition. He rejects the Social Darwinist theory of survival as "atomistic" and "non-solidaristic" and one that undermines the reality of the very goodness of the universe. Rauschenbusch concludes:

> . . . among the masses who are being ground up in this evolutionary mill there will be a growing sense of the inexorable cruelty of natural law and a failing faith in the fundamental goodness of the universe. And if the universe is not at bottom good, then the God who made it and who runs it is not good. Or perhaps there is no God at all. Goodness is folly. Force rules the world (1907:316).

Cooperation not competitive struggle manifests the law of solidarity Rauschenbusch took to be fundamental to the natural order of the universe. In the end, the solidarity at the foundation of the Darwinian theory of evolution was the natural law of the universe and pointed to the benevolent and immanent creator God of Christian evolution.

Rauschenbusch appropriated the understanding of solidarity he found at the foundation of Darwinian evolution. As with social solidarity, the unity of the race in its biological solidarity played a role in his understanding of the solidarity of human existence as a whole.

Rauschenbusch and the Social Gospel

Rauschenbusch was influenced by Socialism and Darwinism, embracing the notion of solidarity he found at their respective centers. However, he identified his work most completely with the movement known as the social gospel.

Background of the Social Gospel

The social problems plaguing the United States after the 1860's were considerable. Democracy was profoundly challenged and the question whether government itself was able to deal with unrestricted laissez-faire capitalism has been raised. Cushing Strout says:

> . . . many reformers were forced to recognize that traditional political democracy had been subverted and was not itself, even if uncorrupted, sufficient to master the new problems of industrial society (1974:227).

Robert Handy points out that, "the solutions of an earlier agrarian age were increasingly inadequate" (1976:264). Dores Sharpe expands on these perceptions when he says:

> How. . . should a democracy deal with trusts or with preferential rates on railroads? Experience offered no technique, for there had previously been no democracy, no trusts, no railroads. . . . There were few ethical and legal precedents, because such possibilities had never existed before. How were citizens of a country, which had always been a land of small towns and rural villages, to know how to deal with the political and social complications of suddenly overgrown urban centers like New York, Chicago, Cleveland? (1942:4).

The question of the relation of democratic government to laissez-faire capitalism and particularly to the economic conditions of the late 1800's was a pressing one.

If government often felt paralyzed in the face of economic conditions created by unchecked capitalism, and in fact wielded less power than many barons

of industry, the churches in the urban centers were even more ill-equipped to deal with the increasing numbers of poor and the growing urban crisis. Arthur Schlesinger says, "American Protestantism, the product of a purely middle-class society, faced a range of problems for which it had neither experience nor aptitude" (1931:306). The churches of the mid and late nineteenth century thought in terms of the individual rather than society. Henry Emerson Fosdik describes the situation:

> In the middle 1880's. . . American churches were predominantly individualistic in their emphasis. . . . the churches' attention was centered not on seeing to it that the will of God was done on earth but on seeing to it that individuals were prepared to escape from earth to the joys of heaven.
> . . .
> As one prominent churchman put it as late as 1911: 'The real business of the church is to preach the Gospel. It is not the mission of the church to abolish physical misery or to help men to earthly happiness' (1957:xv).

Ethically, sin and salvation were held to be private matters: "the common ideal of the Christian life was to avoid the gross sins of the flesh, . . . follow the Benjamin Franklin virtues of thrift, honesty and respectability, to love one's immediate neighbor in good deeds of charity, and thus prepare oneself for the destination of heaven" (Beach, 1951:127). The only social perspective around which the churches were able to rally was the cause of prohibition. It was an easy transition from preaching temperance as a private virtue to calling for the prohibition of alcohol as the panacea for social ills. F.M. Szasz explains that prohibition reform went beyond the regulation of alcohol to embody the outlines of an ideal society:

> The prohibition movement during this period extended beyond the desire to regulate the consumption of alcohol by the individual to include a view of the ideal social order. The advocates of prohibition saw it as the chief cure for poverty, crime and prostitution. To destroy alcohol would in large measure destroy the others (1947:65).

Economically, mainline Protestant churches identified largely with capitalism (Boller, 1969:118). The belief in individualism and individual initiative, central to classical Protestant and Enlightenment thought, was the bedrock of American economic life. Henry F. May says:

> Doctrines of hard work and saving that had formed part of Protestant teaching for centuries and had been most successfully acclimatized in the United States did not lose their hold in one generation of argument.
>
> . . .
>
> Most church members had, after all, been taught since childhood that America's traditions of religious, political and economic individualism were the last stage of human progress, the final working out of the Divine Plan. In many cases, these beliefs were too strong to be shaken by the social crisis of the nineties (1949:198).

In general, religion either sanctioned or ignored the economic life of the nation in the late nineteenth century. Industrial wealth and power were defended as "extensions of Protestant energy -- proper fruits of the Protestant ethic at work" (Meyer, 1961:27). The gospel of work and vocation was transformed into the "Gospel of Wealth" (Beach, 1951:127). If churches did not sanction the status quo, they regarded the economic order to be outside their purview and left it to its own codes and devices (Beach, 1951:127). Henry F. May observes that, "in 1876 Protestantism presented a massive, almost unbroken front in its defense of the social status quo. . ." (Quoted in Hudson, 1961b:302). Winthrop Hudson says that, "Leaders of the churches may have disagreed about many things, but they displayed remarkable unanimity in their appropriation of the existing economic order and of the 'principles' or 'laws' of political economy which provided its theoretical foundation" (Hudson, 1961b:302). The middle classes, who had attained some prosperity during the 1800's, "concluded that the laissez-faire code of the developing industrial society actually represented God's way of doing things" (Hudson, 1961b:136). Sidney Mead, incorporating Henry May's observation, says, "greed at the top could be ignored or accepted as a tool of progress, while 'misery at the bottom could be waved aside as inevitable or, at most, treated by a program of. . . philanthropy'" (1963:162-163). Private charity was the means urged by the churches to alleviate social misery stemming from poverty. "Christians were encouraged to follow John Wesley's advice to get all they could, to save all they could, and to give all they could" (Brauer, 1965:235).

If the churches' response to the social crisis was one of individual charity, it should also be pointed out that structurally the churches were not able to handle the large concentrations of poverty in the cities. Conservatives urged private charity and resisted "as inconsistent with personal freedom the new social

emphasis" (Handy, 1971:157).[38] Those Protestant leaders who did attempt to deal with the poor in broader social terms established structures separate from the churches and made no attempt to change the social structures which created poverty. Robert Handy says:

> They urged cautious reforms of a voluntary type. . . they sought to help the victims of social maladjustment. . . through the development of the relief programmes of city mission societies, the founding of rescue missions where homeless men could be fed and cared for, and the shaping of extensive parish programs in which the poor and unfortunate could be aided (Handy, 1976:300).

The energy of Protestantism was focused on helping the individual rather than effecting change in the socio-economic structures which were creating the problems. The churches' emphasis was not on the collective body but on the individual soul. Aaron Abell characterizes the churches' position as one of "failed leadership" at a time when society most needed its ethical and religious hegemony. He says:

> . . . the Protestant churches did not supply leadership or guidance to members interested in charity and works of mercy. As a result, indiscriminate almsgiving widely prevailed among Protestants, acting either individually or through secular associations. . . (1962:8).

Private charity, philanthropy and stewardship were developed as strategies for aiding the poor, and, as Ronald White points out, the question of the relation between the accumulation of wealth and the rise of urban poverty was never asked (White, 1978:53).

Indeed, there were protests against the prevailing social evils, but these came not from within the church, but from outside of it. Henry Fosdick characterizes the protests as "altogether outside the churches and, like Marxist Socialism, . . . commonly antichurch and antireligion" (1957:xv). Increasingly, protest was coming from the ranks of labor which had become alienated from the churches. Further, mainline Protestant churches in general were moving out of working class neighborhoods into wealthier residential areas. Arthur Schlesinger reports:

> In the cities the building of church edifices lagged behind the advance of population. . . In the twenty years preceding 1888

> seventeen Protestant churches moved out of the district below Fourteenth Street, New York, though two thousand more people crowded into it. . . . In the decade after 1878 twenty-two thousand residents in the thirteenth district of Boston were without a single Protestant church, and it was said that in the heart of Chicago, sixty thousand. . . had no church, either Protestant or Catholic. It was generally true of large cities that those parts which needed most religious attention got least (1978:306-307).

Schlesinger goes on to say that in instances in which more elegant churches existed in working class neighborhoods, the working class felt out of place among the churches' finery of stained glass windows and expensive choirs (1978:307).

The upheavals caused by labor in its strikes created a strongly unsympathetic attitude on the part of the churches. Throughout the strikes of 1877 (Railroad), the Haymarket strike (1886), the Homestead strike (1892) and the Pullman strike (1894), the churches reacted with shock and denunciation. Winthrop Hudson says:

> Orthodox economic theory had taught them that labor was a 'commodity' subject 'like all other commodities' to 'the imperishable laws of demand and supply.' And . . . in a free country the sole responsibility of government to both capital and labor was 'the simple duty of enforcing contracts' and preserving peace. [The churches]. . . were more shocked by the. . . [tendency] of the strikers to riot than by the. . . conditions which caused the strikers to riot [in the first place]. Thus the whole fabric of society seemed in danger of being torn apart, and many of the Protestant periodicals responded with almost incredibly brutal denunciations of the workers (1961b:309).[39]

If the churches were alarmed by the strikes, there was also fear concerning the labor unions. In the unions, the churches of the eighties and nineties feared the threat of Socialism which they identified with revolution, anarchy and godlessness. One historian of the period says: "Most were at least nominally concerned over the problems of poverty, but fear of socialism which they associated with labor, prompted them to oppose the unions" (Olmstead, 1960:481). The *Christian Advocate*, a prominent Protestant paper called the unions "despotic and revolutionary in tendency," argued that they contained "communism," and called on the nation to "legislate trade unions out of existence" (Reported in Brauer, 1965:238).

Rauschenbusch summarizes the relation of church and labor in an essay entitled "A Public Ministry." Implicit in his statement is the call for a change on the part of the church. Rauschenbusch says:

> One important and growing class in our population is largely alienated from the church -- namely, the industrial workers. The alienation is most complete where the industrial development under the capitalistic system has most completely run its course. . . . The church has passed under the spiritual domination of the commercial and professional classes. . . . As that consciousness increases it becomes harder for the two classes to meet in the expression of faith and love. . .
>
> The working people are now developing the principle and practice of solidarity, which promises to be one of the most potent ethical forces of the future, and which is essentially more Christian than the covetousness and selfishness which we regard as the indispensable basis of commerce. If this is a correct diagnosis of our condition, is it strange that the church is unable to evangelize a class alienated from it by divergent class interest and class morality? (1904:142).

The perspective of the mainline Protestant churches of the late nineteenth century, with their emphasis on individual salvation, private charity and support of the economic status quo, prevented them from grasping the nature of poverty as a structural problem. They were unable to provide the leadership necessary for challenging those structures which were unjust and as a whole could not effect the social change required.

Beginnings of the Social Gospel

It was only with the shift in discussion from a consideration of individual cases and causes of poverty to a consideration of the social patterns and causes of poverty that the inadequacy of an individualistic approach to the social problem became apparent. Ronald White points out:

> The whole issue is framed in a new way when discussion shifts from the poor to the condition of poverty. This shift from individuals to systems. . . calls into question. . . the presuppositions and strategies of the voluntary societies (1978:57-58).

When poverty came to be seen as a social problem as well as an individual problem and when it came to be understood in its interrelatedness to what was occurring in society as a whole, then its manifestation came to be seen as related to capitalist conditions of uncontrolled growth of wealth, factories, etc. White says:

> . . . the problem began to be seen in all of its interrelatedness: the accumulation of wealth and the spread of poverty, the increase of factories and the reality of slums. The growth of the social sciences, especially sociology, provided the means of more sophisticated assessments of the dimensions of poverty in the American cities (1978:53).

The biological and social sciences contributed to the new understanding of poverty, that is, as a socio-economic as well as individual phenomenon. The sciences viewed society as an organic whole, interrelated in all its aspects. James Dombrowski says: ". . . nineteenth century science had destroyed the notion of society as an aggregate of discrete units and had substituted the concept of social organism" (1936:17). The understanding of the organicity of society, the interrelatedness of its different institutions, its very solidarity was a scientific discovery which required a social strategy for the problem of poverty. White says:

> The promise and the problems of life were now set irrevocably in the context of social causation and environment. If the problems of poverty were social, the most powerful religious response. . . would be social in nature (1978:54).

In the words of one critic of the period: "Conscience had to become 'social conscience'" (Dillenberger-Welch, 1954:245).

The social gospel evidenced the viewpoint of the social sciences.[40] The new viewpoint was accompanied by what Ronald White terms a "sociology of solidarity" (1978:58). The idea of social reform was radically changed. The focus of reform shifted from person to structure, from individual life to life lived in specific social conditions within the larger society. Social structures came to be seen as requiring reform if individuals were to be effectively helped. The social gospel, founded on a social understanding of human existence, defined itself in its most mature expression, in terms of a concern with the transformation and regeneration of the social order for the sake of the salvation of the whole as well as the individual. Paul Carter says:

> Intellectually, the first premise of the social gospel was that man in society stands under religious judgment. [However]. . . the rationale of the social gospel went on at once to another declaration, namely, that this religious judgment is to be passed, not upon individual men only, but also upon the collective institutions which men have made. . . . men are obliged to act directly upon the social order and work for its reconstruction, as a part of their religious responsibility to their fellow men. Here, it seems to me, is the crux of the social gospel (1954:4-5).

If the social gospel understood society to influence and shape individual existence, it also believed in the individual's ability to shape and change the social structures of society and in the plasticity of social structures themselves. John Dillenberger and Claude Welch point out that:

> Earlier it had been assumed that the patterns of the social orders were fixed, and that the quality of the spiritual life was essentially separable from the quality of social life. Now, however, social institutions themselves were seen to be malleable, and both redemptive and restrictive in relation to spiritual life. Thus, where prior to the social gospel the influence of Christianity on social structures had been largely indirect and unconscious, now it became conscious and explicit. Now men felt required as part of their Christian witness, to conceive of the transformation of social structures as such, and of the creation of new patterns (1954:254).

The strategy of social reform changed from "social service" to "social action," from saving the individual to changing the structure, in order that the individual be helped and saved. Ronald White reports:

> The emphasis now shifts from social service to social action. Social service, rested in charity, and works with the poor after the fact -- when they are already out of work and out of hope. Social action attempts to deal with the problems before the fact; it is concerned to change social structures and systems which encourage unemployment and poverty. Both social service and social action are needed as a fully Christian response to human need. . . . But it was the prophetic stance of the social gospel which saw clearly that social action was the best response to the crisis of a changing America (1978:58).

Some critics of the social gospel have judged its strategy of structural reform to mean that social salvation was more important than individual salvation. This critique polarizes social and individual existence.[41] For the social gospel, individual existence could not be separated out from social existence and the regeneration of the social order was undertaken for the sake of the individual rather than, like Marxist Socialism, as an end in itself. Waldo Beach points out:

> Over against Orthodox Protestantism, they [the social gospelers]. . . were environmentalists, in that they discerned both the crippling power and the redemptive possibilities of economic and political institutions. But they avoided the detrimentalistic collectivism of Marxist Socialism. They kept the individual and the 'personal equation' to the fore front, both in terms of the criteria by which institutions were to be judged and the leverage by which institutions were to be changed (1951:128).

An organic understanding of society did not permit the individual to be viewed atomistically or in isolation; the full salvation of the individual implied the salvation of the social order. Although a redeemed social order did not mean the automatic salvation of all individuals, the full salvation of the individual did require the salvation of the whole social order. Although the individual remained the goal of reform, the individual was never viewed apart from humankind and society.

The organistic understanding of society and the reform strategy of social regeneration marked the uniqueness of the social gospel. Sidney Mead says:

> Francis Greenwood Peabody. . . in 1900. . . in *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* argued. . . 'the social question of the present age is not a question of mitigating the evils of existing order, but a question whether the existing order itself shall last. It is not so much a problem of social transformation and reconstruction.' The demands . . . are 'not patronage but justice; not the general distribution of superfluous wealth, but the righteous restitution of wealth to those who have created it.' This indicates a mood widely prevalent at the turn of the century. It was an outlook in sharp contrast to that prevailing during the seventies and eighties. It marks the emergence of the social gospel movement in the denominations (1963:168).

A fundamental premise of nineteenth century scientific thought, the organic, interrelated, solidaristic nature of human society, required a new social

strategy, i.e., the transformation of social structures if the individual was to be fully saved. This new social understanding, and the social strategy required, was appropriated by the social gospel and became its distinguishing characteristic.[42]

The Social Gospel

Historically, the social gospel was always a "minority impulse" within American Protestantism (Ahlstrom, 1967:74).[43] C.H. Hopkins describes it as "the reaction of Protestantism. . . stimulated by socialism. . . to the ethics and practices of capitalism as brought to point in the industrial situation" (Hopkins, 1940:319).[44] From its early expression in the work and writings of Horace Bushnell and Washington Gladden in the mid-1800's, the social gospel decried the competitive basis of laissez-faire capitalism as unchristian and preached a new social order founded on cooperation between capital and labor (Olmstead, 1960:490). F.P. Weisenberger says that "Those who represented an intellectual approach to the cause of social Christianity were in general agreement that unbridled competition needed to be curbed and that the social fatalism of Spencerian philosophy did not provide the answer to America's needs" (n.d.:120).

The social gospel was a response to the ethics and practices of capitalism. Its chief concern was the cause of labor. Hopkins and White point out that, "Although the theatre of social unrest was the new urban environment, the concern of early and later social gospelers was directed in large measure to the labor problem, especially after the eruption of the great social volcanoes of 1877, 1886, and 1894" (1976:63). Hopkins lists four problems with which the social gospel was concerned from the beginning. They were: unrestricted competition, the conflict between labor and capital, business ethics, and the problems of urban life, with emphasis on the relation of the churches to the masses of workers, immigrants and the poor (Hopkins, 1940:27). Although progressive social gospelers[45] required institutional change as well as personal conversion and argued for social ownership, profit sharing and other forms of industrial cooperation, all social gospelers looked upon Christianity as the "inclusive panacea" for the country's social ills, and Christian love as the context in which all change was to be carried out (Hopkins, 1940:30).

Major voices in the 1870's, the early phase of the movement, were Horace Bushnell and Washington Gladden. In the 1880's when the movement began to develop, Josiah Strong emerged as a leading figure. Although Richard T. Ely was not a social gospeler as such, his economic critique of laissez-faire capitalism and recommendations for cooperation profoundly influenced the social gospel after 1880.[46] In the 1890's, as the social gospel came of age, W.D.P. Bliss, George D. Herron, Shailer Mathews and Walter Rauschenbusch emerged as leading spokespersons. Rauschenbusch gave classic formulation to the social gospel's mature thought and carried it into the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The social gospel did not evidence a single theology. Sidney Mead says: "The theologies associated with the movement were many and as diverse as the diverse and individualistic religious pattern in America could provide" (Quoted in Bedell, 1975:318). However, the movement had certain distinguishing characteristics amid its varied theologies. The social gospel operated within the framework of the hope for a fully Christianized society (Handy, 1969:174). It sought to make the values of Christianity relevant to an industrial, urban society (Handy, 1969:176). Its appropriation of the social scientific notion of the organicity of society led the movement to recognize the importance of redeeming social structures in order that individuals be saved. C.H. Hopkins says:

> The realization that the individual is saved in his social context rather than out of it and therefore that the customs of society must be changed if he is to develop his full potentialities, was a far more realistic view than the conservative attitude that had expected to perfect the individual soul in a celestial sphere while the present order was left to decay (1940:341).

Throughout the movement an ethical rather than a dogmatic or pietistic strain was dominant. The ethicizing strain, in part, was a reaction to the otherworldly individualism of earlier, classical Protestantism (Hopkins, 1940:320). The vision of a redeemed social order and the hoped for beginnings of the kingdom on earth required that ethics not be separated from religious thinking. The movement shared the belief in progress characteristic of its age. While progress was not regarded as automatic, it was a requirement for social gospel thinking concerning the transformation of the social order. Visser 't Hooft says:

> It would. . . be grossly incorrect to identify the social gospel with a blind faith in inevitable progress. Nevertheless, the general trend of thought within the movement is definitely optimistic. . . If it is not believed that progress is an absolute necessity, it is certainly held that it is a historical fact and there is therefore a good reason to believe in the possibility of a thorough transformation of social, industrial and international life within a relatively short period of time. The historical progress of society is a process of gradual increase in cooperation and service and a corresponding decrease of selfishness and egotism (1978:57).

Despite its belief in progress and its optimism, there existed in the movement a note of crisis. There was an urgency in the choice between passivity in the face of a materialistic ethos which, if allowed to run unchecked, would lead to the demise of the present order, or aversion of the disaster through work for a regenerated social order.

In spite of its formulations for constructive regeneration, according to C.H. Hopkins, it was, in the end, more successful as a critique of the social order. Hopkins says: "While its recipes remained mostly sentimental and utopian, its diagnosis of modern society was its most realistic feature" (1940:323). It was its critique of capitalism, particularly of capitalism's unregulated competition, which united the social gospelers and formed the foundation of their social outlook and to some degree, their theologies. According to Hopkins:

> . . . competition. . . was soundly condemned. . . . Although proposed substitutes. . . varied ... from vague forms of cooperation to state socialism. . . [all] agreed that unbridled competition was the absolute antithesis of the Christian ethic of love. . . . [This] constituted a frank denunciation of the basic assumptions of the extant order (1940:325).

Theologically, the movement cohered around a few dominant principles. Foundational to the theology of the social gospel was the idea of the immanence of God in history, "a concept derived from the influence of science -- Darwinian evolution in particular -- upon Protestant theology" (Hopkins, 1940:320). The immanence of God in history implied a solidaristic view of humankind. According to C.H. Hopkins, "Belief in an indwelling God working out his purpose in the world of men, naturally involved a solidaristic view of society -- which was. . . supplied by sociology" (Hopkins, 1940:320). A social understanding of human existence implied a social understanding of sin and salvation. The social view of salvation was expressed most profoundly in the

notion of the kingdom of God. Social salvation in the kingdom God required that social structures as well as individuals were to be redeemed. For the social gospel, the kingdom became the centerpiece of social as well as religious hope, the goal of history as well as individual life. The ideal of the kingdom as a social hope was understood to be founded in the social teachings of Jesus, which social gospelers held as foundational for their theology and social thought. Capitalistic competition based on individualism and the notion of the survival of the fittest was unacceptable for a theology which required the welfare and redemption of all. William Sweet summarizes the theological underpinnings of the social gospel when he says:

> The ruling ideas which underlay the social gospel were: first of all, the immanence of God, the possibility of the union of the heavenly and the earthly; second, the vital unity of the race implied in the doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, which called for a brotherhood 'supreme over all inequalities and diversities, and that no man lives or dies or attains happiness apart from his fellow men'; third, that salvation meant not only the restoration of man to a state of purity, it meant also the creating of a new humanity in Christ. . . . All of these conceptions added up to the possibility of establishing the Kingdom of heaven on earth (1947:148).

What had begun as a small, dissident movement within the Protestant churches was officially recognized by Protestantism in the formation of the Federal Council of Churches in 1908. At the Council's center was an ethical thrust which received full expression in the 1912 statement, "The Social Creed of the Churches" (White, 1978:57).

Although a socio-ethical thrust was central to the social gospel, the characteristic which distinguished it and recommends it even today for modern social reform was its appropriation of an environmentalist, structuralist approach to social reform based on the understanding of the organicity of society and the solidarity of human life. Because of its recognition of society as an organic whole, it required that social structures be redeemed if individuals were to be helped and fully saved.

Rauschenbusch clearly recognized the need for structural change and social regeneration as a first priority. In *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, he writes:

> Single cases of unhappiness are inevitable in our frail human life; but when there are millions of them, all running along well defined

> grooves, reducible to certain laws, then this misery is not an individual but a social matter, due to causes in the structure of our society and curable only by social reconstruction (1907:246).

For Rauschenbusch, the attempt to deal with the social crisis and its attendant problems without a regeneration and Christianization of the social order was futile, even insane. Rauschenbusch argues that church workers, and those in social service "have a right. . . to inquire who is unloading this burden of poverty and suffering upon them by underpaying, exhausting and maiming the people" (1907:355). For Rauschenbusch, a structural change was required if a Christian life was to be possible:

> "By all the practical necessities of our social conditions, and by the imperious summons of the spirit of Jesus in our hearts, we are. . . today facing the task of reshaping our social institutions, so that it will become possible for a Christian man to live a Christian life within them, and so that the institutions of society will at least approximately be a social expression of the spirit of justice and brotherhood created in our country by Christ" ("Freedom of Spiritual Religion," 1910:2).

Rauschenbusch believed that his generation would need a new kind of faith for the task of social reconstruction. In *Christianizing the Social Order*, he argued that what was needed was not a faith in the form in which it had traditionally been transmitted, i.e. a faith albeit strong in the conviction of personal sin and forgiveness, but offered "no. . . effective religious conception of redemption for the organic life of human society" (1912:48). What was required, according to Rauschenbusch, was a social faith for the task of social redemption:

> . . . the most pressing task of our present age is not individualistic. Our business is to make over our antiquated and immoral economic system; . . . to create just and brotherly relations between great groups and classes of society; and thus to lay a social foundation on which modern man individually can live and work in a fashion that will not outrage all the better elements in them. Our inherited Christian faith dealt with individuals; our present task deals with society (1912:42).

According to Rauschenbusch, the task of the reconstruction of society required also a "socialized love." The social nature of human problems, which rested on the interrelatedness of society, required that structures be reconstituted

in order that individuals be helped and love permitted expressions at all. For Rauschenbusch,

> With true Christian instinct men have turned to the Christian law of love as the key to the situation. If we all loved our neighbor, we should 'treat him right,' pay him a living wage, etc. . . . But this appeal assumes that we are still living in the simple personal relations of the good old times, and that every man can do the right thing when he wants to do it. But suppose a business man would be glad to pay his young women the $12 a week which they need for a decent living, but all his competitors are paying from $7 down to $5. Shall he love himself into bankruptcy? In a time of industrial depression shall he employ men whom he does not need? . . . will his five loaves feed the five thousand unemployed. . . ? The old advice of love breaks down before the hugeness of modern relations. . . . It is indeed love that we want, but it is socialized love. . . . What we most need today is not the love that will break its back drawing water for a growing factory town from a well that was meant to supply a village, but a love so large and intelligent that it will persuade an ignorant people to build a system of waterworks. . . We want a new avatar of love (CSO, 1912:44).

The new social structures would be shaped along the lines of a social understanding of human existence as one of interdependence and solidarity. For Rauschenbusch:

> We do not want 'to blow all our existing institutions to atoms,' but we do want to remold every one of them. . . . We need a combination between the faith of Jesus. . . and the modern comprehension of the organic development of human society (CSC, 1907:94).

The requirement that the social order be regenerated for the sake of individual and society was an idea that distinguished the social gospel from all other liberal theological perspectives of the nineteenth century. It was central to the ethical and theological work of Rauschenbusch. The understanding that the full salvation of the individual required the salvation of the social order rested, in the end, on the fundamental premise of the organicity of society and the solidarity of humankind.

Critique and Eclipse of the Social Gospel

Theologically, the social gospel is identified with the liberal tradition of the nineteenth century. In its mature expression, it embodied the methodologies of both "Evangelical liberals" as well as "Modernist liberals." Liberalism itself is a confluence of a number of religious and secular currents, beginning with Immanuel Kant and extending into our present day. Waldo Beach summarizes its development when he says:

> Its theological roots go back to. . . Kant, whose philosophy gave impetus to a development in German theology associated with the names of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Harnack, Hermann. . . From nineteenth century secular thought liberalism also drew heavily from the environmentalism of the Marxists and English Socialists, a realization of the conditioning impact of social institutions upon human personality; from Utilitarianism, the ideal of social reform to extend the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number'; and from Darwin and his followers the evolutionary theory of the unilinear and upward development of the course of affairs.[47] These ideas permeated the nineteenth century era of expansion and growth in England and the Continent. When appropriated by the distinctively American temperament of robust optimism, activism, and practicality, the liberal movement penetrated deeply American Protestantism for almost half a century (1951:126).

The first phase of American Liberalism, that with which the social gospel has been associated, "belongs to the period between Newman Smyth's *Old Faiths in New Light* (1879) and Walter Rauschenbusch's *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917). . ." (Averill, 1967:26). The liberalism of this period was characterized by an immanent God, continuity between God and the universe, and a view of reality as perfectable. The world was seen as the medium through which God worked out his intention for humankind. Kenneth Cauthen, a foremost expositor of liberalism, summarizes the liberalism of this period when he says: "In short, liberal theology is the account of how an immanent God works in the universe toward the creation and perfection of a finite spirit who shares the divine image" (1962:213). For liberalism, the idea of an organism rather than that of a machine was a better analogy for the world (1962:210). Cauthen says: "[In liberalism's understanding]. . . the world is a spirit whose supreme goal is the establishment of a kingdom of love and brotherhood on

earth" (1962:120). Revelation was understood to be continuous with human reason and experience; and the Bible's ancient categories required continual revision in light of new knowledge and experience (1962:211). Sin became the "drag of man's natural substructure on his weak but advancing nature"; salvation "the gradual triumph of spirit over nature" made possible by the power which flows from Christ through history (1962:212). The centerpiece of liberalism was God immanent in history working out his plan in conjunction with moral reason and human endeavor.

Cauthen describes two polarities within nineteenth century liberalism: evangelical liberalism and modernist liberalism. According to his definition, the evangelical liberals took their stand within the Christian tradition, and attempted to contact the culture from that point (1962:33). The modernist liberals, on the other hand, took their stand outside the Christian tradition, in the modern scientific culture itself, and attempted to keep alive those elements of Christianity which seemed to be in harmony with contemporary patterns of thought (1962:33). Of the modernist liberals William Hutchison says: "The hallmark of modernism [was] the insistence that theology. . . adapt a sympathetic attitude toward secular culture and. . . consciously strive to come to terms with it" (1968:4). In evangelical liberalism, the Christian tradition was the touchstone of truth, while in modernist liberalism the touchstone was the current truths of the culture.[48]

Common to both evangelical liberalism and modernist liberalism however was the understanding that the task of theology was one of mediation, a reinterpretation of the Christian message in order that it be enabled to speak to the consciousness of contemporary men and women. Cauthen says:

> It must be said that liberalism arose in an attempt to meet a vital need. In its effort to reinterpret the ancient Christian message in terms which were relevant to modern man, liberalism was facing up to one of the essential tasks of theology.
>
> . . .
>
> Protestant orthodoxy which had been shaped to meet the needs of an earlier situation could no longer speak effectively to the new social, intellectual, and spiritual state of affairs which had emerged. Thus . . . it can be said unequivocally that reconstruction of some sort was vitally necessary (1962:214).

Daniel Day Williams offers a concise definition of the liberal enterprise of the late nineteenth century as one of mediation when he characterizes it as "the

movement in modern Protestantism which during the nineteenth century tried to bring Christian thought into organic unity with the evolutionary world view, the movements for social reconstruction, and the expectations of 'a better world' which dominated the general mind" (1949:22). Sydney Ahlstrom characterizes the liberal enterprise as one of mediation when he says: "As liberalism became an increasingly self-conscious movement [it]. . . advanced along two fronts: [it] . . . attempted to achieve an increase in factual and theoretical understanding of the human situation, past and present; and [it]. . . began to rethink the meaning of the Christian tradition in the context of the age's several revolutions" (1967:65-66). For Ahlstrom, "liberals led the Protestant churches into the world of modern science, scholarship, philosophy, and global knowledge" (1972:783).

The social gospel can certainly be seen to be a liberal enterprise. It held the notion of God immanent in history. History and society were understood as organic realities in which God worked out the divine plan for humankind. Revelation was held to be continuous with human experience. Like liberalism, the social gospel was a mediational theology, attempting to reinterpret the Christian message from the perspective of the social sciences for the needs of an industrial society in the grip of a social crisis.

However, Sydney Ahlstrom warns against a too close identification of the social gospel with liberalism. He says:

> Liberalism and the Social Gospel movement must not be identified . . . Liberalism often encouraged complacency and self-satisfaction. It throve mightily among the most socially conservative classes of people. The Social Gospel, on the other hand, was always a prophetic and unpopular impulse. . . . Social Gospelers were usually theological liberals; but the statement cannot be reversed (1972:788).

Thus the use of the term liberal, when applied to the social gospel, needs qualification; the social gospel cannot be identified completely with liberalism. Unlike liberalism, the social gospel never developed apart from a social practice; in fact, some have accused its theology of being subsumed in practice.[49] Unlike liberalism it did not "encourage complacency" or "self-satisfaction"; its motivation was primarily social action and it could not "thrive. . . among the most socially conservative classes of people." Finally, it was not, for the most part, a theology of the academies: it was rather a prophetic theology held by a minority within the Protestant churches. With its theoretical feet firmly planted in a particular social order, it sought to redeem that social order for the sake of

the working class and the poor. Its mediational perspective and distinctive view of society were never only intellectually ordered but socially ordered along the lines of commitment to the regeneration of an unjust social order. Rauschenbusch himself says: "The adjustment of the Christian message to the regeneration of the social order is plainly one of the most difficult tasks ever laid on the intellect of religious leaders" (Quoted in Handy, 1965:201). Christian doctrine was harnessed to the difficult work of creating a just social order. Thus, in qualifying the use of the term "liberalism" to describe the social gospel we may say that by reason of the fact that the theologies of the social gospel, particularly that of Walter Rauschenbusch, were theologies of mediation, they share the method and, in part, the values of liberalism. However, in light of the social gospel's prophetic stance within a specific culture and its commitment to social action for a just social order, it must be distinguished from the liberal enterprise.

After 1918, both the theology of Walter Rauschenbusch and the work of the social gospel came under sharp criticism as liberal enterprises. A major contributor to the critique of liberalism was the American, neo-orthodox theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr. It should be noted that Niebuhr himself came out of the liberal theological tradition[50] and maintained a complex relation with it throughout his life.[51] Niebuhr's criticism of liberalism and the social gospel was directed against what he judged to be a facile optimism with regard to human nature, society and history. Niebuhr judged the social gospel to have forfeited the perspective of a transcendent love, absolute and unrealizable in history, for an understanding of love as immanent in history and realizable within the historical process itself.[52] Liberalism and the social gospel, for Niebuhr, had failed to take account of the radicality of sin in human nature and attempted to locate it in transformable social structures rather than in the depths of the unchanging human condition.[53] Finally, Niebuhr rejected a view of human history which held it to embody its own meaning and fulfillment under the name of unending human moral progress.[54]

The neo-orthodox critique offered an important critical perspective on the liberal enterprise. David Tracy notes the significance of the critique when he says:

> One need not hold that the neo-orthodox theologies really resolved the liberal dilemma. Yet the neo-orthodox recognized that the discipline of contemporary Christian theology had to come to terms with the post-modern understanding of liberal illusions and had to develop more adequate hermeneutical tools to disclose the

profoundly transformative meanings of the central Christian symbols (1979:22).

In light of today's social consciousness, eclipsed after two world wars and the individualistic perspective of neo-orthodoxy, it can be argued that the mediational intent of the social gospel, and its guiding understanding of human existence as social, is not only more relevant to our present experience but also more appropriate for an adequate interpretation of the Christian message than any theology since the turn of the century, including neo-orthodoxy, up to the present political theologies of Europe and South America. If the work of theology is to recover and mediate the profoundly transformative nature of the Christian symbols, in light of the social nature of human existence, the nature of the Christian symbols must be shown to be social in some sense. The mediational impulse of the social gospel can certainly be seen to be correct, and insofar as its principle of mediation was a social understanding of the nature of human existence, it can also be seen to have gone some way toward mediating the transformative power of the Christian symbols as a social power, particularly in the interpretation of the kingdom of God as a social and historical hope as well as a religious and eschatological one.

Rauschenbusch brought both the mediational tendency and social anthropology of the social gospel to its fullest expression in his own hermeneutical method guided as it is by an anthropology of solidarity. As will be seen, his method and its anthropology are contemporary and required for an anthropologically adequate understanding of the Christian texts and their meaning for human existence today.

In the final analysis, the social gospel "stepped outside the churches to intersect the political, social and economic forces of changing America" (Hopkins-White, 1976: xi). In its encounter with the social forces of its day, not only in the social theories of the age but the marketplaces, streets and slums of the urban poor, the social gospel did what the denominations as a whole had failed to do; it brought the Christian message to men and women in the language of and labor for social change. The value of the contribution of the social gospel to the past is unquestioned; the validity of its mediational intent and social anthropology likewise still stands.

Conclusion

Rauschenbusch's anthropology of solidarity had its roots in the culture of his day. The idea of solidarity was mediated to Rauschenbusch through such currents of thought as Socialism and Darwinism and the reforming perspectives of Progressivism and the social gospel. However, his confrontation with the social conditions of poverty and oppression among those to whom he ministered during his eleven-year pastorate in New York City was decisive for his formulation of a social anthropology of solidarity. Confrontation with these conditions catalyzed Rauschenbusch's formulation of an anthropology of solidarity which would become the interpretative principle for his mediation of the Christian message to his own day and society.

Out of the experience of the conditions of poverty and injustice, and directly related to the social understanding of human existence, arose the question of the relation of the Christian message to these conditions. It was this question which would determine the nature of all Rauschenbusch's subsequent work, particularly its method and the centrally informing role played by his anthropology of solidarity, as an interpretative work, mediating a radically social understanding of the Christian message to his day and society.

II.

BROADENING THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL BASE: THE THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF WALTER RAUSCHENBUSCH

Methodologically, every theology may be said to be hermeneutical insofar as it is required to interpret the historical texts of Christianity for its age. Liberal theology was consciously hermeneutical insofar as it took a mediational stance between Christianity's historical truth claims and the truth claims of its contemporary culture. Likewise the social gospel was hermeneutical in intent insofar as it sought to interpret the Christian message for a culture in the throes of rapid industrialization, blighted by poverty and economic injustice. However, some theologies may be considered hermeneutical projects in themselves. They have as their goal the interpretation of the Christian message in the terms offered by the experiences and insights unique to their contemporary culture. Rauschenbusch's theological program may be seen to be such a project. Although his work contains no explicitly articulated theory of interpretation,[55] it can be seen to be a conscious effort to interpret Christianity's texts in the terms of the emerging social consciousness of his age. The following chapter will offer a consideration of Rauschenbusch's method as interpretative in intent, i.e., implicitly hermeneutical, and one guided by a social understanding of human existence, i.e., an anthropology of solidarity.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section places Rauschenbusch's work in the context of current hermeneutical discussion. When his work is considered in the context of the work of Rudolf Bultmann and Dorothee Soelle, major contributors to the hermeneutical discussion, its dynamic can be seen to be hermeneutical. When read in light of the method of Dorothee Soelle, an anthropology of solidarity emerges as its guiding hermeneusis. Although there are significant differences between the work of Soelle and

Rauschenbusch, which will be considered briefly, both Soelle and Rauschenbusch methodologically, can be seen to enlarge the anthropological referent of the traditional interpretation of the Christian message from an individualistic understanding of human existence to a social one. Soelle's work serves as a heuristic paradigm for the dynamic of Rauschenbusch's work, showing it to be a hermeneutical theology governed by an anthropology of solidarity.

The second section offers a constructive outline of Rauschenbusch's understanding of the nature of human solidarity. Although Rauschenbusch never systematically outlined his understanding of human solidarity, statements of its nature are present throughout his work. Based on the statements culled from his work, the chapter offers a summary of Rauschenbusch's understanding of solidarity as it informs the biological, social and religious dimensions of human existence.

The chapter concludes with an examination of how Rauschenbusch's anthropology of solidarity functions as a hermeneutic in his work as a whole, mediating the Christian message to his day. It examines how his anthropology interprets scripture, ethics and Christian doctrine to issue in a reinterpretation of the traditional understanding of the Christian message supportive of the work of social regeneration for his day.

Developments in the Discipline of Hermeneutics

The study of interpretation shows that the hermeneutical situation arises out of the requirement that a past or "distant" text be brought into or mediated to the present as a condition for the possibility of understanding. Anthony Thistleton states the crux of the hermeneutical "problem" when he says: "It is shaped by the fact that both text and interpreter are conditioned by their given place in history" (1980:16). Because the meaning of a particular text is tied to its historical moment, its meaning has to be mediated to or reappropriated for the present; that is, one cannot simply repeat, one has always to interpret -- a situation in which even repetition itself becomes a form of interpretation. The distance between the past and the present requires a bridge or an interpretative, mediational principle by which the past can be brought into the present. The bridge or principle is not only the condition for understanding but itself informs the interpretation.

Recognition of the hermeneutical situation or the hermeneutical problem grew out of the rise of historical consciousness in the nineteenth century. Hans-Georg Gadamer characterizes the beginnings of the awareness of the hermeneutical problem when he says:

> It is characteristic of the emergence of the 'hermeneutical' problem that something distant has to be brought close. . . a bridge built between the once and the now. . . Something of this awareness was contained in the theological claim of Reformation Biblical exegesis . . . but its true unfolding only came about when a 'historical consciousness' arose in the Enlightenment. . . and matured in the romantic period (Quoted in Thistleton, 1980:51).

The hermeneutical situation and its challenge was addressed in a preliminary way during the Romantic period by the work of Friederich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher called for the use of "objective linguistic resources" (Thistleton, 1980:40) in the exegesis of a text, and developed a theory of interpretation that sought understanding through "penetration into the author's consciousness" (Thistleton, 1980:40). Schleiermacher's principle of empathetic reading depended upon "an understanding of human life and existence as a whole" (Thistleton, 1980:42). The understanding of human existence, which included self-understanding, was the pre-understanding, the perspective which the reader brought to the reading and interpretation of the text.

In a similar vein, the historian Wilhelm Dilthey contributed to the hermeneutical discussion begun with Schleiermacher. Dilthey's theory of interpretation rested on his notion of the "recovery of the I in the Thou" of the text as the means of understanding the author's work (Thistleton, 1980:45). Here the reader projected himself/herself into the experiences of the author and relived the experiences in his/her own consciousness (Thistleton, 1980:45). As with Schleiermacher, Dilthey's method required a pre-understanding that rested on self-understanding. Thistleton summarizes the discussion when he says: "From these views of Schleiermacher and Dilthey no extension is needed to the theory that the key to the interpretation of a text, whether Plato or St. Paul, is self-understanding" (1980:46).

The work of Schleiermacher and Dilthey contributed in a major way to the hermeneutical project of Rudolf Bultmann, a significant voice in the twentieth century hermeneutical discussion. Bultmann's program is complex and the influences at work in his project require a brief summary. Liberalism, the History of Religions School, Orthodox Lutheranism and Existential philosophy all

play a role in his work and are reflected in his own anthropological pre-understanding.

Bultmann's Liberalism is apparent in his concern that the text, specifically the New Testament texts, be relevant to modern, scientific self-understanding (Thistleton, 1980:217). The History of Religions School exerts its influence in Bultmann's work with the recognition that the historical text, particularly that of the New Testament, is a distant reality to which modern consciousness is offered little, if any, access (Thistleton, 1980:218). Commenting on Bultmann's relation to the History of Religions School, Norman Perrin has said:

> He [Bultmann] is heir. . . to the movement which. . . established the strange and foreign nature of the New Testament to the modern world. After several generations of thinking in terms of moral principles and ethical teaching which united the New Testament with the modern world, Jesus was suddenly seen as an apocalyptic visionary. . . A great gulf opened up between the new Testament and modern man. Bultmann was enormously aware of this gulf. . . and his hermeneutics are ultimately an attempt to bridge it (Quoted in Thistleton, 1980:218).

Bultmann's Lutheranism and adherence to dialectical theology rejects any objectifying language about God in which the acts of God are placed within the realm of human laws and verification. Thistleton argues that,

> Bultmann wishes to attack objectifying language in the realm of revelation even more radically than Heidegger attacks it in the realm of language about man. . . . Bultmann cannot allow room for any objectifying language about God or his acts, except insofar as this represents a clumsy attempt to express existential self-understanding through myth (1980:292).[56]

Finally, Existential analysis is at work in Bultmann's project as the analysis of being, which constitutes his anthropology. He takes over Heidegger's analysis of being and Christianizes it. Bultmann's existential anthropology allows him to speak of God and human existence without objectification. For Bultmann, "In my existential self-understanding I do not learn what existence means in the abstract, but I understand myself in my concrete here and now. . ." (1953:203).

Bultmann's existential anthropology becomes the key to his hermeneutical project. Thistleton points out that Heidegger's analysis seems tailored to the

solution of the problems with which Bultmann was dealing. According to Thistleton:

> Heidegger's role in Bultmann's theology is to offer a conceptuality which seems almost to have been designed to achieve the very task with which Bultmann was already grappling. It is not simply a matter of Heidegger's providing a vocabulary which is supposedly more intelligible to modern man. . . By his analysis of Dasein Heidegger offers a way of talking about the self which apparently avoids the problem of objectifying it, and which promises to disclose truth beyond the self through self-understanding. . . . Heidegger's philosophy. . . is Bultmann's hermeneutic, in the sense that it makes talk of God possible; [and]. . . it makes such talk intelligible to modern man (1980:232).[57]

If Heidegger's analysis allows Bultmann to solve the problems of objectifying language about God and man through personal, non-objectifying terms, Heidegger's existential anthropology likewise allows Bultmann to address the hermeneutical problem, posed by both Liberalism and the History of Religions School, i.e., the problem of bringing the distant text near and allowing it to speak meaningfully to twentieth century consciousness. In Bultmann's method, an existential anthropology bridges the gap between the past of the text and the present of the interpreter. It is the mediational principle which allows for the possibility of understanding in the present. In "The Problem of Hermeneutics" Bultmann says:

> If Dilthey affirms that the condition of the possibility of understanding is a 'basis of universal human nature,' or the fact that 'nothing can appear in the expression of another individual that is not also contained in the life of the interpreter,' this can be put more precisely by saying that the condition of interpretation is the fact that the interpreter and author are human beings who live in the same historical world in which human existence takes place as existence in an environment in understanding association. . . [and] that. . . [existence] should also include questions and problems, struggle and suffering, joy as well as resigned withdrawal (1950:75-76).

If Dilthey attempts to "solve the hermeneutical problem on the basis of a view of human nature as constant throughout history" (Thistleton, 1980:236), Bultmann, appropriating Heidegger's categories, attempts to bridge the gap between past and present on the basis of this same understanding of the possibility

of a universal anthropology, an anthropology he judges to be most appropriately an existential anthropology. For Bultmann,

> Our question is simply which philosophy today offers the most adequate perspective and conceptions for understanding human existence. Here it seems to me that we should learn from existentialist philosophy, because in this philosophical school human existence is directly the object of attention (1958:55).

Bultmann's existential anthropology functions as the bridge, or mediational principle from past to present. It becomes the guiding pre-understanding by which Bultmann approaches the text and interprets it for the present.

For Bultmann, because the author of the historical text and the reader of the present share a common humanity, communication between past text and present reader is not automatically guaranteed. The condition for the possibility of understanding begins with a question of concern which the reader brings to the text. The text is mute without the questioning of the reader. The question itself grows out of and is determined by the pre-understanding each reader brings to the text. According to Bultmann:

> . . . it is important to remember that every interpretation is actuated by the framing of specific questions, and without this there could be no interpretation at all. Of course these questions need not be framed explicitly or consciously, but unless they are framed the texts have nothing to say to us (1953:191).
> . . .
> Without. . . a preunderstanding and the questions guided by it, the texts are dumb (1950:84).

The preeminent question for Bultmann, which grows out of and is determined by his own existential anthropological pre-understanding, is the question of human existence, more specifically, the question of the reader's own personal existence. Bultmann says:

> I think I may take for granted that the right question to frame with regard to the Bible. . . is the question of human existence. I am driven to that by the urge to inquire existentially about my own existence. But that is a question which at bottom determines our approach to and interpretation of all historical documents. For the ultimate purpose in the study of history is to realize consciously the possibilities it affords for the understanding of human existence (1953:192).

It is the question of personal existence, specifically the question of the possibility of authentic personal existence in the face of the contingencies and tragedies of human life, including death itself, which Bultmann believes to be the question most disclosive for an understanding that remains faithful to past text yet is relevant for contemporary existence. Since all men and women bear the burden of human existence, the question of personal existence itself becomes the bridge to the present, the means by which past text is mediated to present understanding. Speaking specifically of scripture, but implying all historical texts, Bultmann says:

> Now we have found the adequate way to put the question when we interpret the Bible. This question is, how is man's existence understood in the Bible? I approach the Biblical texts with this question for the same reason which supplies the deepest motive for all historical research and for all interpretation of historical documents. It is that by understanding history I can gain an understanding of the possibilities of human life and thereby of the possibilities of my own life. The ultimate reason for studying history is to become conscious of the possibilities of human existence (1958:54).

The texts of scripture hold a preeminent place in Bultmann's hermeneutical project. For Bultmann, the bible as distinguished from other literature, becomes "a word addressed personally to me, which not only informs me about existence in general, but gives me real existence" (1958:54). In the interests of opening the texts of scripture to modern understanding Bultmann carries out his program of demythologization guided by the question of his existential anthropology. His work attempts to mediate the Christian kerygma as meaningful for individual life today by separating the kerygma out from the mythological framework in which it has come down to us in the texts of scripture. For Bultmann:

> . . . the kerygma is incredible to modern man, for he is convinced that the mythical view of the world is obsolete. We are therefore bound to ask whether, when we preach the Gospel today, we expect our converts to accept not only the Gospel message, but also the mythical view of the world in which it is set. If not, does the new Testament embody a truth which is quite independent of its mythical setting? If it does, theology must undertake the task of stripping the kerygma from its mythical framework, of 'demythologizing' it (1953:3).

Bultmann's concern in mediating the New Testament kerygma to men and women today by means of a hermeneutical method which he calls demythologization is the concern with contemporary self-understanding. Bultmann says:

> . . . natural science is not the only challenge which the mythology of the New Testament has to face. There is the still more serious challenge presented by modern man's understanding of himself. . . . He is not, as the New Testament regards him, the victim of a strange dichotomy which exposes him to the interference of powers outside himself (1953:6).
>
> . . .
>
> . . . the importance of the New Testament mythology lies not in its imagery but in the understanding of existence which it enshrines. The real question is whether this understanding of existence is true. Faith claims that it is, and faith ought not be tied down to the imagery of New Testament mythology (1953:11).

Bultmann's hermeneutic of demythologization, guided by an existential anthropology, certainly protects against objectifying language about God as well as human existence. Insofar as myths "give to the transcendent reality an immanent, this-worldly objectivity" (1958:19), the transcendent reality of God is protected from human objectification or control. However, it can also be argued that Bultmann is even more deeply concerned about mediating an understanding of human existence that in reality is not objective but existential and personal. Bultmann's mediation is made possible by his anthropology which he judges to be universal and existential.

For Bultmann the anthropology of the bible is the same existential anthropology of contemporary men and women. Thus, an existential, anthropological bridge between the past of scripture and the present of the reader allows men and women to turn to scripture with their questions in confident expectation of receiving an answer relevant for personal authentic existence in the world today. John Macquarrie summarizes Bultmann's program of demythologization in terms of his anthropology when he says:

> The problem of demythologizing might be expressed as the problem of disentangling the primary historical from the secondary historical in the New Testament. The primary historical consists of possibilities of existence which are repeatable, present to me today as they were present to others in the past. . . . What Bultmann is trying to do is to spotlight this essential primary historical in the New Testament, to separate it from the now meaningless secondary

> historical, and make it a real possibility of decision for man today (Quoted in Thistleton, 1980:251).

Bultmann's existential anthropology is the key to his whole hermeneutical project. It is the bridge from the past of the text to the present of the reader. It guards against objectifying talk of God and man, and guides his method of demythologization in order that the possibility for authentic existence enshrined in the kerygma of scripture's texts be mediated to modern consciousness as a real possibility for human life today.

Dorothee Soelle, a major voice in contemporary theology, has also contributed significantly to the hermeneutical discussion. Her study, *Political Theology* (1971), attempts to retrieve Bultmann's hermeneutical method for political theology today. Soelle takes over Bultmann's notion of an existential analysis of existence as the proper bridge or interpretative principle for mediation of past text to present reader. However, she judges Bultmann's existential anthropology to be inadequate. She shows that an existential analysis of human existence does not exclude a social understanding of human existence but, in fact, requires it. Soelle attempts to retrieve Bultmann's analysis for political theology by broadening his anthropological referent from an individualized understanding of human existence to a social, solidaristic understanding of human existence.

Bultmann's individualistic anthropology does not offer an adequate interpretation of human existence. According to Soelle, existence cannot be separated out from its social context. She argues that existential interpretation does not require the individualistic restriction Bultmann places on his anthropology, but rather is a result of his own nineteenth century perspective:

> From a theoretical point of view, existentialist philosophy as Bultmann understands it offers no basis for an apolitical interpretation, but Bultmann limits this openness to individualistic existence. For example, he summarizes Rom. 14:17 as follows: 'The reign of God. . . is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.' He then proceeds to interpret: 'And that means: the conception of bliss is thought of with regard to the individual.' This is to be inferred not from the Pauline context but no doubt from the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie [context]. The charge raised here by political theology. . . against existentialist interpretation proceeds on the assumption that salvation has been reduced to privatistic categories; in other words, it has been reduced to a matter that affects only the individual as an individual (1971:42)

Soelle holds that a more adequate understanding of human existence is one that does not separate it from its social context but understands it as radically informed by that context. She argues:

> The conflict. . . between those who insist upon the immeasurable significance of the individual and those who emphasize the collective in contrast to the individual is unfruitful, because a proper understanding of existence, even of individual existence, is inconceivable apart from a social context. Even our personal decisions are determined by social behavior patterns that bear the stamp of the classes to which we belong (1971:43).

Soelle believes that Bultmann fails to "unpack" his own understanding of human life as historical existence. Bultmann himself says: "As a self who exists historically, I am not isolated either from my environment or from my own past and future, which are in a special way a part of my own environment" (1953:203). Although Bultmann asserts the importance of history's defining role in human existence, he fails to integrate its social nature into his anthropology:

> Bultmann is certainly aware that man is determined by his past -- and what else should that mean except that he is subject to biological, social and psychological forces. . . that is a formal insight which remains unpacked. Existentialist interpretation neglects the condition of its own preunderstanding (1971:45).

Because human existence cannot be understood apart from its social context, Soelle calls for a more comprehensive anthropology -- a deprivatized understanding of human existence as the proper understanding for any interpretation of existence that claims to be anthropologically adequate. A deprivatized anthropology, for Soelle, does not mean a depersonalized anthropology. Quite the contrary, precisely because a social anthropology takes account of the whole person in his/her concrete social situation, the situation which gives rise to and circumscribes personal hopes and goals, a social understanding of human existence is required if the personal and unique dimension of human existence is to be taken seriously at all. Thus, for Soelle, the unique and personal nature of individual human existence cannot be understood apart from its social nature and social context:

> . . . being a person first becomes a concrete, tangible reality, precisely when one becomes aware of his dependence on society and,

> conjointly, of the latitude permitted by that society at specific points (1971:46).

Soelle describes her project as a "political hermeneutic" (1971:58), a "political interpretation of the gospel" (1971:56). She says of her hermeneutic that it is one "in which politics is understood as the comprehensive and decisive sphere in which Christian truth should become praxis" (1971:59). Because human existence cannot be separated from its social context, it is in the social or political arena where theology is required to function. Thus, Soelle reads history, and particularly scripture, with a pre-understanding of human existence that is structured by inclusion rather than exclusion of the social dimension of human existence. If Bultmann approaches the text, particularly scripture, with the question of authentic existence for individual human life, Soelle approaches the text with the question of authentic existence for all human life. Soelle says:

> The interest of existentialist theology was focused on man, and its guiding hermeneutical principle was the individual's question about himself, about the possibility of living authentically (1971:59).
>
> . . .
>
> Political theology begins with a modified preunderstanding. Its guiding hermeneutical principle is the question of authentic life for all men. That does not mean that the question about individual existence must be suppressed or thrust aside as nonessential. But surely that question can be answered only in terms of social conditions and in the context of social hopes. . . . Only what is relevant to the life of everyone in society, can be regarded as understanding (1971:60)

If Bultmann holds that scripture addresses the question of personal existence, Soelle understands scripture to be informed by a social anthropology and address the question of human existence as social existence. For Soelle, an anthropology inclusive of the social nature of human life more effectively bridges the gap between past text and present situation; it hears scripture more adequately because it hears scripture speak to present-day men and women in their social situation. In fact, for Soelle: "This preunderstanding of a possible life for all men in society is criticized and transformed by its encounter with the message of the gospel" (1971:60).

An example of Soelle's political interpretation of scripture, i.e., one guided by a social anthropology, is her reading of John 5.7. In the story of the invalid at the pool of Bethesda, Soelle believes the gospel speaks of human existence as

radically social, so much so that, even in the personal condition of sickness, the story teaches that we are bound up with others in a solidarity of life. Soelle says:

> John's Gospel tells of the pool at Bethesda where invalids await an angel to stir the water. The first to climb into the water after it moves is healed. Jesus talks with a sick man who has been waiting for many years. He is not in a position to enter the water and says to Jesus: "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled" (Jn. 5.7). . . . Without other men he has no chance. His illness. . . is not his private affair with which he must deal alone; it is rather brought into a social context which poses a question to other men. Jesus puts an end to the situation in which one man must say "I have no man" by putting an end to the isolation that is both the consequence and cause of affliction. In this story healing means: not having to say any longer "I have no man." . . . the gospel restores sickness and healing to their original social context[;] . . . it makes the sickness of the sick the sickness of Jesus, from which he finally dies, and. . . it links the healing of one to that of another. . . (1971:68-69).

Soelle accepts Bultmann's understanding of truth as existential, that is, as that which is available only through living rather than as that which is available in objective categories to the detached observer. Quoting Bultmann approvingly, Soelle says:

> . . . truth is itself the life that one searches for. . . By accepting truth man surrenders himself in terms of his old projects and opinions. This happens because he 'has to take the way to it for himself.' This movement toward truth cannot be reduced to scientific thought, 'for only on the way does the truth disclose itself.' Truth is not taught and then accepted but lived and practiced (1971:72).

However, Soelle criticizes Bultmann's understanding of truth, not in its concreteness and situationality, but in its failure to recognize that life lived concretely and situationally is also life lived socially. The social or political context is "necessary for truth to become concrete" (1971: 73), that is for truth to become truth. For Soelle, truth is never divorced from its lived reality, and lived reality is social.

Central to Soelle's project is the social statement of the central Christian realities of sin and conversion. For Soelle, a social anthropology issues in an understanding of human sin that is also radically social. Soelle defines the human condition as one informed by both compulsion and freedom, i.e., the condition of

having been born into a world not of our making, yet also free to collaborate with the structures of the world or change them. In light of a condition structured by both freedom and compulsion, sin, for Soelle, becomes any act of accommodation to or collaboration with social structures of injustice and oppression. In this social interpretation privatized forgiveness becomes inadequate (1971:88-89). Soelle explains:

> From a theological point of view, the contradiction between the inheritance from a world already there and the sin of accommodation to it arouses a desire that is no longer content with the forgiveness of individual sins (1971:89).

Soelle speaks of our solidarity in sin when she warns that those who attempt to change structures of sin and injustice without first recognizing their own involvement and complicity in structures of injustice and oppression are not only naive but guilty of projecting the enemy outward, rather than recognizing the sin that has been internalized from the culture and society in which all participate (1971:92).

We cannot escape the social nature of our existence. Only by recognizing that our existence is one that is radically grounded in the social reality of our world are we able to begin to come to terms with our own sins of collaboration and accommodation and, in freedom, begin to change structures of sin and injustice. Soelle concludes:

> Those who flee civilization believe they are innocent and nonparticipating; they would save their own souls from corruption. Only when the individual's existence is portrayed no longer as 'squatting abstractly outside the world' (Marx) but as grounded in social relationships -- only then will it be possible to appropriate our own world in the consciousness of freedom (1971:88).

Forgiveness and conversion are likewise interpreted as social realities. For Soelle, what is required for conversion is faith in the possibility of a new beginning (1971:94); a breaking of the old forms of enslavement "in such a way that we are able to believe in liberation and begin to realize it with one another" (1971:96). For Soelle, this requires loving community:

> . . . we need a group of human beings who make it possible for us to begin afresh; at the very least we need partners who accept us as we are, who have faith in our repentance, who believe we are capable of conversion. In the ancient church this social role was filled by the

> Christian community, which criticized and absolved the individual (1971:104).

In a society, however, which isolates individuals and pits them against one another in an alienating, competitive struggle, the context for forgiveness and a new beginning cannot be created (1971:94). For Soelle, the competitive and isolated nature of our society destroys the possibility of genuine forgiveness and prohibits the new beginning that is required in conversion. The traditional Christian answer that "God forgives sin" or that "forgiveness [is] from above" is unacceptable because it negates the reality of the one who has been offended and the God of Jesus Christ whose life required mediation through the world and who "signifies the salvation of all" (1971:101). The reality of humanity and the nature of God are negated in privatized forgiveness: God is expected to act without regard for the one/s offended and irrespective of the social consequences of sin. Soelle argues:

> Is forgiveness possible apart from the one who has been offended? Is it conceivable that God forgives behind the back of those whom it properly concerns?... What kind of role could conceivably be played by a God who acts without mediation? Can he intervene 'from above' and establish peace where none can exist[;] . . . a God who settles. . . debt in. . . [the] stead [of those who have been wounded], who makes arrangements with us at their expense, is not the God of Jesus who signifies the indivisible salvation of all (1971:100-101).

Forgiveness is forgiveness only when bestowed by the brother or sister or those who have been wounded; conversion is a new beginning only when life can be lived out concretely with others in community. Soelle concludes:

> That our life in spite of the sin of collaboration with existing forces can have significance, that liberation is possible, can be realized only in conversion. No one, however, can do it all alone; the act is destroyed as soon as it appears solitary and private (1971:102).
> . . .
> There can be no forgiveness for one individual only. Whenever it is sought in the immediate experience of God -- behind the backs of other men and without the laborious detour through the world -- it destroys itself . . . (1971:104).

Soelle's hermeneutical project, her social interpretation of the Christian message, is determined by an anthropology of solidarity. For Soelle, being can never be being in itself; this is an untrue and abstract impossibility. Being is

only being in solidarity with all other human life. Human life, grounded in and circumscribed by the social situation into which one is born, yet free to change this situation, is lived out in authenticity only with the realization that it is radically bound up with all other human life around it.

If Bultmann's project carries the hermeneutical moment from an understanding of human existence as an abstract, objectifiable reality to an understanding of human existence as a personal existential reality, Soelle's project broadens Bultmann's existential anthropological referent from a privatized understanding of human existence to a social, solidaristic one. Her method enlarges Bultmann's pre-understanding to more adequately reflect human reality as a radically social reality. Her call for a deprivatized anthropology is based on the belief that a social understanding of human existence is, in the end, more faithful to the nature of human existence and the anthropological horizon of scripture itself.

Rauschenbusch's Method as Hermeneutical

The hermeneutical problem becomes more prominent during periods in which the truth claims of a culture are sufficiently revolutionary as to require a new bridge or principle of interpretation in order that past texts be appropriated for the age. The call for a new interpretation of Christianity's message similarly grows out of a situation in which a revised interpretation is required in light of the experience of new human realities. Bultmann, for example, perceived the need for a renewed interpretation of scripture in light of twentieth century humanity's search for authentic existence, and its inability to hear a kerygma couched in an outmoded, mythological conception of the universe. Soelle perceived the need for a renewed interpretation of scripture in light of the systematic oppression of large groups of people and the requirement that scripture speak a message of liberation. Likewise, Rauschenbusch perceived the need for a revised interpretation of the Christian message in light of the failure of his own inherited theology to address the situation of those victimized and oppressed by the unjust social structures arising out of the industrial capitalism of his day, and the requirement that the Christian message issue an imperative of justice for a renewed social order.

For Rauschenbusch there existed a great and urgent need for a restatement of the Christian message, and a retrieval of its social themes in light of the

growing injustice of the social order of his day. Rauschenbusch's revised reading of the Christian message was motivated by his encounter with the social conditions of the working class to whom he ministered during his New York pastorate. He speaks of the need for a new interpretation of scripture in the face of the economic injustices of his day when he says:

> When I began to apply my previous religious ideas to the conditions I had found, I discovered they didn't fit. . . I had to set myself against all that I had previously been taught. . . . I had to revise my whole study of the Bible. . . (Quoted in Stackhouse, 1968:16).

As early as 1887, Rauschenbusch recognized the presence of a social question and the need for a response to it by the Christian message. The social question, the question of the possibility of an equitable existence for all, became the guiding question for Rauschenbusch's social reading of scripture. At the conclusion of his first paper on social issues of his day, Rauschenbusch wrote:

> . . . there is a social question. No one can doubt it, in whose ears are ringing the wailings borne along on the pent-up torrent of human life. Woe to the man who stands afar off and says peace, peace, when there is no peace. . . . Let us take heed lest we. . . bow to that which is, and refuse allegiance to that which ought to be (Quoted in Jaehn, 1976:17).

Like Bultmann, Rauschenbusch approached scripture with the question of the possibility of authentic human existence, specifically within the social order of his day. However, unlike Bultmann and consonant with the pre-understanding of Soelle, his question grew out of a social rather than a privatized understanding of human existence. Dores Sharpe describes the situation when he says:

> Rauschenbusch found that his religious ideas were not capable of being applied to th[o]se tragic and sinful conditions. There was a chasm between the gospel for the individual and a gospel big enough to redeem the whole social system (1942:62).

Methodologically, Rauschenbusch broadens the anthropological base of the traditional interpretation of scripture and theology to include a social, solidaristic understanding of human existence. When scripture and Christian theology were read in terms of a social understanding of human existence, the social themes of the Christian message were retrieved and could be mediated to the society of his day.

If the key to Bultmann's hermeneutical project is an existential anthropology focused on individual existence, the key to Rauschenbusch's hermeneutical project, like that of Soelle, is an anthropology which understands human existence as social and encompasses in its focus the social orders of human existence. In his reading of scripture, formulation of a Christian social ethic, and social restatement of the Christian doctrines for his day, Rauschenbusch's change of the traditional interpretation of human existence from a privatized understanding to a social, solidaristic understanding guides his interpretation and constitutes his project as hermeneutical.

An anthropology of solidarity, in Rauschenbusch's project, becomes the interpretative principle or bridge by which the Christian texts of the past are interpreted and mediated to the present of Rauschenbusch's day. Although Rauschenbusch did not explicitly contribute to the hermeneutical discussion of the nineteenth and twentieth century, and his work contains no articulated theory of interpretation, the method of his project is hermeneutical insofar as he consciously interprets the Christian message for his day in the terms of the contemporary insight that the nature of human existence is one of solidarity. The principle of solidarity guides his project, enabling the Christian message to address the social order with its imperative of social justice.

Rauschenbusch's Anthropology of Solidarity

Although Rauschenbusch never systematically outlined an anthropology of solidarity, it is expressed in his work as the biological, social and metaphysical mode of being in the world, the condition in which all life is bound together and which determines, at the most fundamental level, the nature of human existence as radically social.[58] Melvin Vulgamore describes Rauschenbusch's idea of solidarity as it informs his anthropology when he says:

> Rauschenbusch did, indeed, presume an organic cohesiveness in the human community as one of the. . . foundations for his thought. . . And this solidarity was as all-encompassing as can be imagined or described. It is spelled out in both science and religion. 'From a scientific standpoint, man is a social being and society is a natural cohesion of men.' Biology confirms the 'hereditary solidarity of the race,' and this is readily observable in the 'solidarity of tradition and inheritance.' In short the basic fact of the human community for

> Rauschenbusch is the urge for affinity and unity, a kind of eschatological goal-orientation, whether good or evil, positive or negative, constructive or destructive -- a unifying central focus without which human beings would not be human (1967: 524-525).

Rauschenbusch understands solidarity to be the very condition of human existence in its biological, social and religious aspects. For the purposes of this discussion, an examination of Rauschenbusch's understanding of solidarity can be made in terms of its biological, social and religious nature.

The Biological Nature of Human Solidarity

Biologically, Rauschenbusch considers human life to be continuous; human beings are "bound together in a unity of life" (CSC, 1912: 461). He argues that all human life is kept alive by and shares the same vital biological life force. In "The Corporate Life of Humanity" (1896), he states:

> The human individual is not an isolated being. By his descent he is organically connected with the past of his race, bearing about in the impulses and forces that fashion his life the results of the development of past generations. By his power of originating new life he bears a similar organic relation to the future of the race, influencing by his deeds today the life of coming generations to the end of time. . . Men do not lie together like grains of sand in a heap, that touch now and press upon each other but the next moment are scattered by a gust of wind. They are related to one another like cells of a living organism, feeling the same impulses, particularly the same nervous impulses and kept alive by the same vital force (3-4).

Love, the highest and fullest expression of solidarity, finds expression in the biological aspect of human solidarity when it is linked with the propagation and continuation of the race. For Rauschenbusch, love binds the past, present and future together in the biological continuity of life (DWBC, 1914: 80).

Rauschenbusch's belief in the biological unity and continuity of human life is an important aspect of his understanding of human solidarity. The biological nature of human solidarity is often presupposed in his descriptions of and statements about social and religious solidarity. An example of the way in which the biological nature and the social nature of solidarity overlap can be seen in the

critical remarks of Vernon Bodein who paraphrases Rauschenbusch's concept of community. It is difficult to discern here where the biological nature of solidarity ends and its social expression begins; their realities appear to overlap completely. Bodein says:

> A collective conception of humanity is involved in his principle of the solidarity of mankind. By this Rauschenbusch means that men are linked in an organic, collective life. The human being is not an isolated being but by descent is organically connected with the past of his race and by his deeds today influences the life of coming generations. An organic, collective life is formed wherever a number of human beings live and work together, love and hate, and unite in bonds of family and friendship. The unity of this corporate body exists constantly (1944: 81).

The Social Nature of Human Solidarity

If Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the biological nature of solidarity relies on his belief in the rather straight-forward notion of the unity and continuity of all life, his interpretation of the social nature of human solidarity relies not only on his belief in man's social tendency toward unity, but also on his profound insight into the determinative nature of the social order as a whole for individual human life. Janet Fishburn points out that an understanding of society as an interacting whole was characteristic of the thinking of the later social gospel figures. She says:

> The different intellectual orientation of the two groups [the early social gospelers represented by Gladden and Abbott and the later social gospelers represented by Peabody and Rauschenbusch] results in two different theories of society. The earlier leaders conceptualized society as organic in a biological sense. The later men described society in the anthropomorphic sense of a person possessing body and soul. Gladden and Abbott thought of society as a sum, or a collection of individuals. Each individual counted as one element of the nation in the same way that votes represented the will of the majority. Social institutions served to evoke and complete the social nature of the individual and they used the word social to denote the social nature of the individual. The Social Gospel . . . meant that Christianity had implications for the social whole, as well as for individuals.

> Peabody and Rauschenbusch granted more complexity to the social order, viewing it primarily as a sum of interacting institutions. The individual existed as part of a national whole. . . The later Social Gospelers sought the establishment of 'Social Christianity' (1981:100).

Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the relationship between institutions and individuals and the determinitive role of institutions for human life finds expression primarily in the idea of social groups and institutions as super-personal forces, capable of taking on an independent existence of their own, generating and transmitting ideas and values throughout society, and shaping individuals to their own ends. Rauschenbusch's insight derives from the work of Josiah Royce, and is a significant component in his understanding of the social nature of human solidarity.[59] Rauschenbusch's understanding of the social nature of human solidarity is more complex than either his understanding of its biological or metaphysical nature and his insights here contribute substantially to the development of his social ethic and theology.

The social nature of solidarity, for Rauschenbusch, is first and foremost expressed as the tendency of human nature toward unity and cohesion in communities large and small. For Rauschenbusch, it is a wholly natural and universal phenomenon that "wherever a number of human beings live and work together, love and hate, and unify in the bond of family and friendship, an organic, collective life is formed" ("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1986: 4). Communities, nations and whole societies are the result of human nature's social tendency toward unity. Societies exist in solidarity so much so for Rauschenbusch that they can be compared to a musical instrument in which all parts of the instrument vibrate in unity, or even the human body:

> The nation is like the resonant body of a musical instrument, one side vibrates and the whole resounds. . . The social organism, like the human body, has its nervous apparatus. . . It is [thus] of the highest value to have a nervous system which finds its center in the conscience and will respond to the nobler sensations (RK, 1891: 169).

The great movements of history for Rauschenbusch are examples which reflect the corporate nature of human existence: "The great movements of popular passion, like the crusades, the Reformation, the French Revolution. . . are spasms of the corporate body in which its unity can be most plainly seen"

("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1896: 4). The social nature of human solidarity, expressed in the tendency toward association and community, creates the social bonding which becomes the necessary "nerve" of the social movement. According to Rauschenbusch:

> . . . is it not a remarkable thing that in this great crowded globe, where men are suffering and dying every second, and where most of us need all our strength to provide bread for our own stomachs. . . there should be any interest at all in a lot of foreigners whom none of us has ever seen? . . . That sentiment is the nerve of the social movement. If that nerve were dead or paralyzed there would be no social movement ("Ideals of the Social Reformers," 1896: 206).

Rauschenbusch's understanding of the social nature of human solidarity includes the institutions and orders of society within which humans interact and by which they are shaped. For Rauschenbusch, these institutions and orders are a significant aspect of the organicity of society and the social solidarity of human existence. The idea of an institution or an entire social order as an organism is founded on the perception that individual lives are bound together in such a way as to create a unity that is greater than the sum of the individuals together. L.J. Averill describes Rauschenbusch's understanding of the solidarity of the institutions of the social order and the social order itself when he says:

> . . . society is not simply an aggregate of individuals to be affected only by first affecting its discrete individual members. The social organism is not the simple sum of its parts any more than the biological organism is, for when the parts are joined, its organic connections give a distinctive power that would not have been guessed in examining the isolated parts, and a distinctive function that is more than the individual function raised to an aggregate power (1967: 129).

Implied in Averill's description is the notion of the semi-independent nature of the institutions of society and of society itself, and the determinative nature of the social order and its institutions for human life. It is the insight into the self-determining nature of social institutions and their power over human life that constitutes one of Rauschenbusch's most significant perceptions concerning the nature of social reality. Roger Haight characterizes Rauschenbusch's perception of the nature of society and its orders when he says:

> The social institutions which human beings fashion and in which they participate take on, as it were, a life of their own. They are objective relative to each individual, forming an external condition or sphere into which each is socialized. . . . [D]istinct from the will and freedom of individuals taken together as an aggregate, social structures have a function and finality that absorb individual freedom and channel it according to their own logic (1988: 480-481).

Although the institutions and orders of society begin as extensions of individual powers, according to the nature of solidarity, as Rauschenbusch interprets it, they taken on a spirit and force of their own. They profoundly influence individual life, shaping it to their own ends.

Rauschenbusch terms these structures the super-personal forces of society. He understands them to be capable of the generation of ideas and values in their own self-interest, often in conflict with the common good.[60] He points to the capitalistic system as one social complex which has generated values in the interests of its own preservation at the expense of the common good (CSO, 1912: 167).

The ideas generated by the super-personal forces and social groups in general are transmitted throughout society (TSG, 1917: 57). The transmission of these ideas and values, and the good or evil that result from them, depends on the medium of solidarity provided by the organic nature of society as a whole (TSG, 1917: 79).

Finally, the super-personal forces can be said to create and embody the very spirit of the age itself. Rauschenbusch interprets the institutions of business and the economic order of his day to embody the spirit and values of materialistic capitalism (CSO, 1912: 318).

Rauschenbusch characterizes these super-personal complexes as "the most powerful ethical forces in our communities" (TSG, 1917: 72), assimilating and shaping individuals in their own interests and to their own ends (TSG, 1917: 11, 62). They exert control not only over their own members, but over society as a whole, affecting the individual lives of all (TSG, 1917: 72).

The social nature of human solidarity requires that the superpersonal forces of society and society itself be redeemed if the individual is to be saved in the fullest sense. For Rauschenbusch, the implications of the social nature of solidarity for human life and salvation are clear:

> . . . those who have learned to understand the organic unity of society know how profoundly the individual is conditioned in all his acts and

> thoughts by the social life that makes and molds him, and sets his goal and his limits (CSO, 1912: 200)
>
> . . .
>
> But many of us have still to learn that the individual is not saved in the fullest sense as long as the collective life is not also saved" ("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1896: 25).

The Metaphysical Nature of Human Solidarity

Axiomatic to Rauschenbusch's concept of the spiritual solidarity of the race is his understanding of the divine life of God as the foundation of all life. The spiritual solidarity of humankind rests on the understanding of God as the source of all life and foundation of its solidarity. For Rauschenbusch,

> God is the common basis of all our life. Our human personalities may seem distinct, but their roots run down into the eternal life of God who is the ground of the spiritual oneness of the race. . . The consciousness of solidarity, therefore, is of the essence of religion (TSG, 1917: 186).

The biological and social nature of Rauschenbusch's anthropology of solidarity is reflected in his idea of the metaphysical or spiritual solidarity of humankind. Rauschenbusch holds that men and women have always brought their social experiences to their interpretation of God; their social conceptions have determined how they understood the God-concept (TSG, 1917: 194). Rauschenbusch brings a social consciousness to the interpretation of the doctrine of God, and his God-consciousness in turn grounds his understanding of the spiritual solidarity of the race. For Rauschenbusch, "The all-pervading life of God is the ground of the spiritual oneness of the race and of our hope for its closer fellowship" (TSG, 1917: 186).

The consciousness of spiritual solidarity issues in the acceptance of God as the Father of all, living in each, and the requirement of service to all, especially those in need. Love for God, in Rauschenbusch's interpretation, is expressed preeminently through love and service to humanity. The first and greatest law, the love of God, is not separated from, but intimately bound up with, love for all humankind and appears, in fact, to be inseparable from it. Rauschenbusch says:

> We love and serve God when we love and serve our fellows, whom he loves and in whom he lives. We rebel against God and repudiate

> his will when we set our profit and ambition above the welfare of our fellows. . . (TSG, 1917: 48).

The love of God as love for brother and sister, expressed in Christian service, is the final test of human life, determining how we fare at the final judgment. Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the Christian doctrine of the last judgment is shaped by his understanding of the requirements made by the spiritual solidarity of human life. If God is the bond of all human life, he is also the one we ultimately love or reject when we serve or fail to serve our brothers and sisters. Placing words of solidarity in Jesus' mouth, Rauschenbusch argues:

> . . . Jesus says: 'Oh, no, ye did it unto me. My life is so identified with my brethren that when ye fed and clothed them, ye fed and clothed me. God is living in their worn human bodies. When ye comforted them, ye comforted God' (UM, 1912: 10).

If Rauschenbusch characterizes those at the last judgement who fed, clothed and comforted their brothers and sisters as having fed, clothed and comforted God himself, he characterizes those who failed to do so as those who "failed to reckon with the social consciousness of Christ and with God's sense of solidarity. . . " (UM, 1912: 11).

Although Rauschenbusch's understanding of the social nature of human solidarity contributes most decisively to his work as a whole, his understanding of the biological and spiritual nature of human solidarity is equally necessary for a complete understanding of his interpretation of the nature of human existence. Each aspect of human solidarity reflects the reality of the other aspects. They overlap and intertwine in his description of human existence in such a way that he rarely speaks of one without implying the other two. The biological, social and spiritual dimensions of human solidarity are, in the end, the fundamental condition of human existence as Rauschenbusch understands it.

We turn now to an overview of how Rauschenbusch's idea of solidarity, as an anthropology, functions as the interpretative principle in his hermeneutical method throughout his work as a whole. Rauschenbusch's principle of solidarity can be seen to function as a bridge or mediational principle in his social appropriation of the past texts of scripture, in the development of a social Christian ethic, and in a social restatement of the Christian doctrines. Rauschenbusch's anthropology of solidarity guides his method of interpretation to issue in a radically social interpretation of the Christian message for the social order of his day.

Rauschenbusch's Anthropology of Solidarity as Hermeneutic

Methodologically, Rauschenbusch reads the texts of scripture from the perspective of his understanding of human existence as solidaristic, and retrieves the social horizon of the prophets, Jesus and the early church for his own age. Glen Altschuler has characterized Rauschenbusch as one "with a thesis in search of corroborating evidence" (1971: 142).[61] John Dillenberger and Claude Welch point out that,

> The underlying principle of [Rauschenbusch's]. . . new understanding of the gospel was the explicit and consistent recognition of the social nature of personal existence. Society was seen as an organism rather than as a mere collection of individual units and human inter-relationships as 'vital' and 'solidaristic' (1954: 53).

Rauschenbusch interprets the Old Testament perspective on human existence as one of solidarity. He finds evidence for the Old Testament's anthropological perspective in the self-understanding of the Jewish people. Their self-understanding was determined first by the manner in which God addressed them. God addresses the Jewish people as the nation of Israel, communicating with them as a social, moral and religious whole ("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1896: 6). Rauschenbusch points out that, "This conception of the nation as a great personal unity so governed Jewish thought, that the individual life was almost crowded out of sight" ("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1896: 6).

The nature of Israel's religious life is understood to have been determined by its social self-understanding. Israel was always held collectively responsible by the prophets for its actions and transgressions ("Corporate Life of Humanity, 1896: 6). Likewise God's grace was mediated through the community; when the nation repented, it was restored as a whole ("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1896: 6).

The Law code of Israel and its classical prophetism, the heart of Israel's religion and relation to God, is understood to be grounded in the solidaristic self-understanding of Israel. The message of classical prophetism was one focused on the salvation of the people as a whole; the prophetic texts show the prophets never to have been concerned with their own salvation, but with the restoration and salvation of the nation (TSG, 1917: 20). The social focus of the prophets

becomes, for Rauschenbusch, the earmark of classical prophetism and authoritative for Christians today (TSG, 1917: 20).

Rauschenbusch likewise locates a social understanding of human existence in the New Testament, particularly the life and message of Jesus. In *Christianizing the Social Order*, he argues that the New Testament texts show that, "The solidarity of mankind was the great conviction underneath all Jesus' teachings" (1912: 327). Rauschenbusch understands the kingdom ideal to be the center of Jesus' life and teaching and can be interpreted, as such, as the religious doctrine of social salvation.

The experiences and theologies of the New Testament communities further evidence the social anthropology of the New Testament. The theology of Paul, particularly, is understood in terms of its solidaristic anthropology. The central Pauline doctrine of Christ as the New Adam is interpreted in terms of Paul's own view of the solidarity of the race. It is possible to understand Paul's teaching of Christ as the New Adam only insofar as one understands the reality of racial solidarity. Rauschenbusch argues,

> Paul had a deep sense of the solidarity of humanity. He saw two humanities, the old and the new. The old had sinned in Adam, and by its organic relation to its ancestor, was penetrated by the power of sin and corruption. . . and doomed to perpetual dying. The new humanity is in organic relation to the second Adam, Christ; and as sin and death, like poisoned blood, flowing from Adam, had penetrated all members according to the laws of physical propagation, so now from the Second Adam, through spiritual propagation and the unity of life based in faith, the powers of a new spiritual and incorruptible life flow through all members of the new humanity ("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1896: 19-20).

According to Rauschenbusch, Paul's great doctrine of the sin of Adam "lies in fragments" and is meaningless today, not because of "the lifelessness of the doctrine but [because of]. . . the individualism which so dominates. . . religious thought that we are hardly able to get hold of the collective idea" ("Collective Life of Humanity," 1896: 19).

Finally, the central event of salvation, witnessed by the New Testament as the doctrine of the incarnation, articulated in the texts of Paul and John, requires the perspective of human solidarity in order to be intelligible at all. For Rauschenbusch:

> The Pauline and Johannine doctrine of the incarnation is not Christ come to live as an example of the perfect life; but that in Christ the fullness and power of God entered into organic connection with humanity in order to fill humanity with a new life. If men were isolated beings and there were no collective life in humanity, it would be necessary for Christ to be in the flesh perpetually and to come into direct contact with every individual. But since humanity is a single organism, it suffices that the divine life has once entered, according to organic laws; the new forces will go on working until they have fulfilled themselves ("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1896: 20).

When the texts of scripture are read from a pre-understanding of human solidarity, for Rauschenbusch, the biblical doctrines, many of which have remained in the tradition but lost meaning because of an individualistic reading, are welded into a meaningful whole ("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1896: 12). Their meaning flows from the fact that a social understanding of human existence is the anthropological horizon of scripture itself. Insofar as we read scripture today through the lens of a social understanding of human existence, we read it rightly. An anthropology of solidarity retrieves scripture's social perspective and mediates it to the present of Rauschenbusch's day.

Rauschenbusch's formulation of his social ethic is closely related to the interpretation of scripture. His social ethic represents the attempt to fulfill the requirement that the Christian message, specifically scripture, speak to the contemporary social order with an imperative of social justice.

Basic to Rauschenbusch's social ethic is the argument that the social crisis of his day is the result of an unchristian individualism motivated by a capitalist economy of competition, the antithesis of human solidarity.[62] The unchristian structure of the social order has caused conditions of poverty, oppression and death for many. Rauschenbusch argues for the alleviation of these social conditions through the implementation of economic structures organized along the lines of cooperation and collective ownership, in line with a solidaristic and interdependent understanding of the nature of human existence.

In Rauschenbusch's interpretation of scripture, scripture offers social norms of justice and love for the social order. Rauschenbusch mediates a contemporary understanding of scripture. Scripture is enabled to address the social order of Rauschenbusch's day in the language of a contemporary anthropology of solidarity. In Rauschenbusch's ethic, the prophets, Jesus and the communities of the early church can be seen to live by the principles of equality,

democracy and cooperation, i.e., principles deriving from Rauschenbusch's contemporary social anthropology. These authoritative Christian voices speak from a horizon of solidarity and become authoritative for a contemporary Christian social order. Rauschenbusch's social ethic mediates scripture to the social order of his day, and solidarity becomes the bridge or interpretative principle for that mediation.

Rauschenbusch's commitment to social regeneration, informed by his revised reading of scripture issues in a social restatement of the Christian doctrines. Glen Altschuler points out that "His fervent espousal of social reform necessitated significant modification in his evangelical liberal theology" (1979: 143). If his theology was to be an effective tool in his ministry and in the work of social regeneration, it required a reinterpretation of Christianity's truth claims in terms of a contemporary understanding of the social nature of human existence. His last great work, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, attempts to do precisely that. Visser 't Hooft describes Rauschenbusch's project in terms of a hermeneutic based on an anthropology of solidarity when he says:

> The old individualistic conception. . . is thoroughly discarded and an attempt is made to interpret the whole of Christianity in terms of social solidarity. God's plan for redemption includes the redemption of humanity as a whole and not only that of individuals. The central idea of Christianity, the one on which Jesus laid more stress than on any other is a collective one: the Kingdom of God. All doctrines can be and should be re-stated in the . . . terms of the new social insight. No one . . . more courageously attempted this heroic task than Walter Rauschenbusch especially in his 'Theology of [sic] the Social Gospel' (1928: 40-41).

A Theology for the Social Gospel offers a consistently social interpretation of the Christian doctrines. Each of the doctrines is restated in terms of a social anthropology of solidarity in order that the Christian message be made intelligible to the audience of Rauschenbusch's day and theology be enabled to play its role in work of social regeneration.

Rauschenbusch's anthropology of solidarity guides his interpretation and mediates a contemporary understanding of the Christian message. His restatement of the doctrines is carried out by broadening the anthropological base of the traditional interpretation of the doctrines from a focus on individual human existence to one on human existence as social. An anthropology of solidarity mediates a meaningful understanding of Christianity in terms of the truth claims of his own day.

Conclusion

Rauschenbusch's method can be characterized as a hermeneutical method guided by an anthropology of solidarity. He interprets the Christian message for his day in terms of a contemporary understanding of human existence as one of solidarity. The hermeneutical theologies of Rudolf Bultmann and Dorothee Soelle heuristically illumine the method of Rauschenbusch's work. Although Rauschenbusch never articulated a method of interpretation, when his work is considered in the context of these projects and the hermeneutical discussion as a whole, it can be seen to offer a restatement of the Christian message for its age in terms of the truth claims of that age.

Soelle's work particularly is disclosive for an understanding of Rauschenbusch's method and his anthropological principle of solidarity. Like that of Soelle, Rauschenbusch's entire hermeneutical project is founded on a radically social understanding of human existence. Like Soelle, Rauschenbusch brings to his reading of scripture an anthropological pre-understanding of solidarity, allowing scripture to speak to and transform society as well as the individual. His social ethic, like that of Soelle, requires that society be structured in terms of what is fitting for all rather than in terms of the good of a privileged few, calling for structures of justice, cooperation and inclusion. Finally, like Soelle, Rauschenbusch offers a reinterpretation of Christian doctrine from the perspective of a social understanding of human existence. In the end, both share as their preeminent goal the transformation of the structures of society into structures of justice and love through a mediation of the Christian message to their day by means of a contemporary anthropology of solidarity.

There are differences in the work of Rauschenbusch and Soelle, however, which should not be ignored. First, Rauschenbusch's work does not consciously function as an ideological critique as extensively as does the work of Soelle. Although Rauschenbusch's work critiques competitive capitalism and its sinful institutions and ideals, as a product of the late nineteenth century, his work harbors idealized notions of family, "womanhood," and other social concepts that are, for the most part, inviolable and not open to critical questioning. Janet Fishburn's study, *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family* (1981) makes this point well.

Second, Rauschenbusch's work does not share with that of Soelle a praxis understanding of truth. Although Rauschenbusch's work does not negate such a notion, his theology is to a large degree distinct from the work of the social gospel rather than existing in dialectical relation of constant revision with it. It should be noted, however, that Rauschenbusch did understand the goal of his theology to issue in transformed social structures of justice and love rather than solely in a transformed theology.

Finally, the philosophical underpinnings of the idea of solidarity differ in Rauschenbusch and Soelle. If Soelle's understanding of solidarity is almost exclusively socio-political, Rauschenbusch's understanding is grounded in a biological as well as a social and metaphysical understanding of solidarity. Rauschenbusch was clearly influenced by Darwinism, particularly Christian evolutionism, which reached the highwater mark of its influence during his day. The focus of their respective interpretations however centers on the condition of solidarity as the fundamental condition of human existence whether spiritual, socio-political or biological.

Rauschenbusch mediated the Christian message to his day by means of a contemporary understanding of human existence as radically social. Insofar as our understanding of human existence today is social, and, in fact, continues to be challenged by Rauschenbusch's insights concerning the radically social nature of human existence, the relevance of his mediation extends into our present. In the end, Rauschenbusch can be seen to have gone some way toward fulfilling Soelle's call for a social understanding of human existence and a deprivatized reading of the Christian texts.

III.

SOLIDARITY AND SCRIPTURE: RAUSCHENBUSCH'S INTERPRETATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Rauschenbusch interpreted scripture from the perspective of an anthropology of solidarity. His reading retrieved the social dimension of major themes of the scriptural message. Central to both the Old and New Testament is the scriptural vision of the kingdom of God. Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the kingdom and his mediation of this scriptural ideal is carried out by means of his hermeneutic of solidarity.

The following chapter is divided into three parts. The first part will consider Rauschenbusch's concept of the kingdom as an interpretation informed by his anthropology of solidarity. Solidarity can be seen to thoroughly inform his interpretation of the kingdom, guiding its transformation into a social ideal for his day.

The second part will focus on the conflict between Rauschenbusch's socio-historical interpretation of the kingdom and the interpretation of the kingdom as an exclusively eschatological reality, advanced by the History of Religions school of Rauschenbusch's day. The conflict shows Rauschenbusch's interpretation to be a social demythologization of the kingdom and brings to light the implications of his method and interpretation for the goal of social regeneration.

The third section concludes the chapter with a consideration of Rauschenbusch's socially demythologized interpretation as a fundamentally modern interpretation and of continuing relevance for today.

Rauschenbusch's Concept of the Kingdom of God

A composite picture of Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the kingdom can be drawn from *Righteousness of the Kingdom* (1891), selected articles from 1892 through 1899, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907), *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912), *The Social Principles of Jesus* (1916), and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917). An examination of Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the kingdom shows it to be thoroughly informed by the principle of solidarity. Rauschenbusch's social anthropology retrieves the social reality of this central biblical category. In the prophets Jesus and the early church, the kingdom hope is understood as the hope for a new social order.

Rauschenbusch understands the idea of the kingdom to have grown out of the social reality of the Old Testament conception of theocracy (Sharpe, 1942: 223). Rauschenbusch defines theocracy as "the idea of an ideal human society, constituted according to divine laws and governed by God" (RK, 1891: 98). Dores Sharpe points out that the theocratic ideal was always a collective ideal: "The old prophetic and apocalyptic hope of a Divine Reign was variously pictured by different elements, but it was always a natural and collective idea. . . always for the nation as a whole" (1942: 41).

As the central social hope of the Old Testament, the kingdom became the center of Jesus' life and message: "the whole aim of Christ is embraced in the words 'the Kingdom of God'. . ." ("The Pulpit in Relation to Political and Social Reform," 1892: 52). Although Jesus received the Jewish hope of the prophets, he also modified it in the direction of universality; the aim of Jesus came to be that of universal salvation. According to Rauschenbusch, "the purpose of all that Jesus said and did. . . was. . . the social redemption of the entire life of the human race on earth" (CSO, 1912: 67).

The universalized kingdom hope, according to Rauschenbusch, became the source and foundation of Jesus' ethic: "The distinctive ethical principles of Jesus were the direct outgrowth of his conception of the Kingdom of God" (TSG, 1917: 133). In fact, "Jesus' moral teachings get their real meaning only when viewed from that center" (CSC, 1907: 67). The kingdom hope becomes the hermeneutical key for understanding Jesus' ethic; Jesus' ethic makes sense only when viewed in the context of the social hope of the kingdom. For Rauschenbusch:

> All. . . [Jesus'] acts and sayings receive their real meaning when we think of them in connection with the kingdom of God, the ideal human society to be established. . . . Jesus desired to found a society resting on love, service and equality. . . . God is a father; and all things would follow. . . . The Kingdom of God is the true human society; the ethics of Jesus taught the true social conduct which would create the new society (CSO, 1907: 70, 72).

The hope of the kingdom in the early Christian communities was also a social hope. The first Christians expected the return of Jesus as the Lord of a new creation. Although they understood his coming as immanent and to signify the end of the present age, it was first and foremost a social hope expressed as the hope for a new social order (TSG, 1917: 24-25).

Rauschenbusch interprets the kingdom hope in its original, historical context as a social hope. He mediates it to the audience of his day in terms of a contemporary social understanding of human existence. The biblical ideal is translated into a contemporary social ideal.

When Rauschenbusch's work is considered chronologically, each of his major works, in turn, consistently offers a contemporary social interpretation of the kingdom which is determined by his understanding of human existence as one of solidarity. In *Righteousness of the Kingdom* (1891), which evidences a more spiritual view of the kingdom than does his later work,[63] Rauschenbusch argues that salvation is not proclaimed as individual regeneration but as entry into the kingdom. Although not stated, the kingdom is clearly understood as a collective social reality (99).

Throughout his writings of the nineties, the kingdom is interpreted functionally as the transformation and redemption of the collective life of humankind. In "A Conquering Idea" (1892), Rauschenbusch states that the kingdom is a "collective ideal" (127). "It takes account of the race as a great unity" (127). In "The Pulpit in Relation to Political and Social Reform" (1892), he holds that the kingdom "is a social ideal. . . and that in that ideal is embraced the sanctification of all life, the regeneration of humanity, and the reformation of all social institutions" (127). In "The Corporate Life of Humanity" (1896) Rauschenbusch states: "the Kingdom of God means the complete redemption of humanity" (8).

In *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907), his first major published work, the kingdom reality is understood by Rauschenbusch as a solidaristic reality and the theological foundation for the work of social regeneration. Rauschenbusch says:

> The Kingdom of God is. . . a collective conception, involving the whole social life of man. It is not a matter of saving human atoms, but of saving the social organism. It is not a matter of getting individuals to heaven, but of transforming the life on earth into the harmony of heaven. . . . Jesus. . . never viewed the human individual apart from human society (66).

Christianizing the Social Order (1912) is motivated by the understanding of the transformative nature of the kingdom for the social order and its redemptive power for humanity as a whole. Here, Rauschenbusch characterizes the kingdom as,

> . . . an idea as broad as mankind, as inclusive as life itself. . . and as Christian as the gospel. Its realization is not like other duties, from man to man, but is a duty that the race owes to the race, the duty of realizing its divine destiny (1912:89).

Finally, in *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917), Rauschenbusch describes the kingdom as "humanity organized according to the will of God" (143). Its reality encompasses humankind in its entirety and "embraces the whole of human life" (145). The kingdom is the "Christian transformation" of the collective life of humanity in its entirety (145).

The solidaristic nature of human life, according to Melvin Vulgamore is the fundamental presupposition upon which Rauschenbusch relied for his mediation of the idea of the "kingdom," whether applied to the kingdom of God or the kingdom of evil. Vulgamore says:

> Rauschenbusch did indeed presume an organic cohesiveness in the human community. . . This is the presupposition behind his free categorization of 'humanity' in the generic sense, or 'the Kingdom of God' on the one hand and 'the Kingdom of Evil' on the other.
> . . .
> The Kingdom Rauschenbusch interpreted solidaristically (1967:526, 530).

Carlyle Marney summarizes well Rauschenbusch's guiding principle as that of solidarity for his translation of the kingdom ideal into a contemporary social ideal:

> Corporate salvation, i.e., the Kingdom of God, can never, in Rauschenbusch, be equated with the sum total of redeemed individuals. Nor can corporate evil be simply the sum total of our

> single sins. It is this devastating notion of social solidarity that gives the Kingdom of God its thrust. . . and condemns mere individualistic salvation as something less than a true Gospel of God (1959:19).

Although the kingdom is translated into a contemporary social ideal, the salvation of the race in its collective life, it never looses its foundation in the life of God. Its dynamism is the energy of God realizing itself in history (TSG, 1917:141). According to Rauschenbusch:

> It is always at hand. . . . It has come, it is coming. . . . God is in all three tenses, the God that was and is and shall be, so is the Kingdom behind which is the face of the living God (RK, 1891:110).

As a dynamic, progressive reality, it is characterized by Rauschenbusch as the "reign of God" rather than the static "realm of God" (SPJ, 1916:49). Because its motive force is the energy of God it is "eternal in the midst of time" and yet, like God, it is in all three tenses (TSG, 1917:141). The kingdom was initiated by God in the person of Jesus. Heralded by the prophets of the Old Testament, it was brought to its fullest expression in the person and message of Jesus. Sustained in history by the Holy Spirit, it will be brought to fulfillment by God in God's own time (TSG, 1917:139).

Max Stackhouse summarizes the balance of the transcendent and immanent dimensions in Rauschenbusch's social interpretation of the kingdom when he says: "The Kingdom of God stands beyond history; yet it is a force in history, actually changing the structure of human thought and relations" (1968:41). Stackhouse argues that, for Rauschenbusch, its course in history can be traced and its growth and progress observed where social orders and human institutions are transformed along the lines of Christian justice and love.[64]

For Rauschenbusch, the kingdom constitutes the revolutionary force of Christianity itself (TSG, 1917:8,11), and it is a socially revolutionary force. The kingdom is revolutionary "in the sense of a complete change from the toleration of evil conditions to an organic striving for the supremacy of righteousness" (Bodein, 1944:79). Social revolution for Rauschenbusch means not destruction of the existing social order and its institutions but a restructuring of social order along the lines of justice and love. Quoting Rauschenbusch, Robert Handy says:

> 'If a man wants to be a Christian he must stand over against things as they are and condemn them in the name of that higher conception of life which Jesus revealed.' Those who belong to the kingdom ever

> demand a thorough reconstruction of the social system in accord with the values of Jesus (1966:75).

John Dillenberger and Claude Welch summarize the revolutionary nature of the kingdom at the heart of Christianity for Rauschenbusch when they say: "The kingdom would come not with the destruction of the present social order, but with the redemption of the 'permanent institutions of human society'" (1954:249).

As the great religious reality of social salvation, the kingdom is characterized by conflict with the other great religious reality, the kingdom of evil. According to Rauschenbusch, "As long as organized sin is in the world, the Kingdom of God is characterized by conflict with evil" (TSG, 1917:140).

Finally, because the kingdom of God is immersed in human history and participates in the life of humankind, its evolution is not separated from human cooperation; in fact, it is dependent upon it. In *Righteousness of the Kingdom* human cooperation is described as the variable yet necessary component for the full realization of the kingdom. Rauschenbusch says:

> Christ appeared the first time when 'the fulness of time had come' (Gal. 4.4). He will appear the second time when the fulness of time shall have come. When that will be depends largely on us. In all the dealings of God with men the human factor is the variable quantity. . . . the fulfillment of his counsel is hastened or retarded according to our obedience or disobedience. . . . [F]orces that are antagonistic to Christ. . . must go down if his is to reign; and we can still see work to be done in the world to make it a fit habitation for our Lord (1891:108).

Although the kingdom is divine in origin and consummation, its progress in history is not separate from human cooperation with the forces making for a Christian social order. According to Rauschenbusch, each succeeding age evidences failures of the past: "Where we have failed to answer the call of God and to throw in our strength, history will always show a hiatus which is but slowly closed" (RK, 1891:110).[65]

The translation and mediation of the kingdom hope into a contemporary social hope is motivated by the goal of Rauschenbusch's hermeneutical project as a whole -- the formulation of a contemporary Christian response to the injustice of the social order and the formulation of a foundation for its regeneration. Throughout his work Rauschenbusch lays blame for the social ills of his age and past ages on an interpretation of the kingdom which has separated it from history

and subverted its social meaning. John M. Barker summarizes Rauschenbusch's perspective on the development of the kingdom ideal following the apostolic period and the loss of its social meaning when he says that, for Rauschenbusch, "The emphasis slowly shifted from the idea of the kingdom as taught by Christ to the idea of the visible Church" (1919:9). As religious life and affairs became separated from the social order, so too did the kingdom. Without the vision of the kingdom in history, the church focused on individual salvation and the kingdom, as a social hope, was lost to religious life. Christian life lost its center and the Christian churches a resource for social hegemony.

Rauschenbusch's mediation of the biblical ideal of the kingdom as a social hope for his day was required if the connection between the Christian message and social renewal was to be achieved. Rauschenbusch's social interpretation of the kingdom provided the nexus between his Christian faith and social praxis. As Ronald White points out, "It was the corporate nature of the Kingdom, both in terms of social sin and social salvation, that formed a theological basis upon which to attack poverty and every other social, economic and political issue" (1978:55).

An Eschatological Concept?

The relation of scripture as a whole to the social gospel movement was of preeminent importance for the movement. If the social gospel message was to be considered more than a sociological analysis of the ills of contemporary society, or a cultural reflection of the best social thinking of its day, it was required to show that its social interpretation could be found in, indeed was rooted in, scripture. Thus the social interpretation of scripture was of great significance for the movement if it was to be accepted and supported by mainline Protestant churches. Robert Handy points out:

> The movement needed to demonstrate that it was rooted in the biblical word, that indeed it was a gospel and not merely a reflection of contemporary social and cultural anxieties. The legitimacy of the social interpretation of Christianity would thereby rest on traditional biblical sources of authority as well as on the practical necessity for Christian social action (1966:60).

Social gospelers held that their social interpretation of scripture was neither new nor alien but, in fact, the oldest gospel of all. Rauschenbusch argued that the redemptive message of scripture always meant social redemption, i.e., the redemption of the nation. This was particularly true in the case of the prophets. For Jesus and the early church it meant a Christian social order. The social interpretation of scripture, for Rauschenbusch, flowed from the original message of the prophets, Jesus and the early church. Rauschenbusch argues:

> The social gospel is in fact the oldest gospel of all. It is 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.' Its substance is the Hebrew faith which Jesus himself held. If the prophets ever talked about the 'plan of redemption,' they meant the social redemption of the nation. So long as John the Baptist and Jesus were proclaiming the gospel, the Kingdom of God was its central word, and the ethical teaching of both. . . [A] practical definition of the Kingdom. . . looked toward a higher social order. . . [Similarly] to the first generation of disciples the hope of the Lord's return meant the hope of a Christian social order on earth under the rule of Jesus Christ. . . (TSG, 1917:24-25).

If social gospelers believed that their interpretation was rooted in scripture, they also believed that it was only in their own day and age that the meaning of scripture could be most fully disclosed. The social consciousness of their day allowed scripture to be understood from the social perspective intended by the prophets, Jesus and the early church. Robert Handy says:

> . . . one of the glories of the present age, they claimed, was the opportunity to recover the full import of the biblical word, which traditional Christian theology had missed. [They were] confident that the social interpretation was not a device of their own fancy but embedded in the theology of the Bible . . . (1966:60).

If social action was "expedient", the social interpretation out of which it grew was grounded, for social gospelers, in the scriptural word.

The social interpretation of scripture received impetus and support from a number of sources. Most significant for the social gospel was the development of the historical study of the bible itself. Dores Sharpe characterizes historical criticism as the study "which was revealing the Hebrew prophets as social reformers and the Jesus of the gospels as their highest successor. . ." (1942:221). The historical study of the scriptures was evidencing a social outlook, which was revolutionary. F.M. Szasz says:

> The realization that the Old Testament prophets and Jesus of Nazareth had been speaking about society as well as individuals was slow in dawning. But when it did arrive, it evoked a revolution in the study of Scripture that was almost as significant as the arrival of the higher criticism (1947:45).

Historical study's informed support of a social interpretation allowed Christians in the present age to hear Jesus' message in the fullest sense; Christians now shared the same social understanding as that of the historical Jesus. Rauschenbusch points out:

> Christians had always bowed in worship before their Master, but they had never taken to understand his life in its own historical environment and his teachings in the sense in which Jesus meant them to be understood by his hearers. . . He has begun to talk to us as he did his friends, and the better we know Jesus the Galilean the more social do his thoughts and aims become (CSC, 1907:46).

The historicization of scripture came to mean its socialization.

Social gospelers held the liberal notion of progressive revelation, i.e., "older interpretations are. . . [not] wrong but. . . incomplete and always capable of being superseded" (Handy, 1966:62). Social gospelers, particularly Rauschenbusch, brought their social experiences and social pre-understanding to the reading of scripture and with the support of the historical method found there a social orientation they believed superseded all past interpretations. Robert Handy summarizes their method when he says:

> The concerns of modernity would serve as a spade with which to attempt the unearthing of further biblical treasures. Rauschenbusch expressed the. . . outlook. . . succinctly. 'The new present has created a new past. . .' and 'the Bible shares in that new social interpretation.' (1966:62).

Fundamental to the historical study of the bible was the recovery of the central message of Jesus, the kingdom of God. For Rauschenbusch particularly, the kingdom ideal was central to the message of Jesus.[66] According to Rauschenbusch, historical studies affirmed the kingdom's centrality: "The new historical study of the bible has put it [the kingdom] to the front" (CSO, 1912:89). Because of the affirmation of the centrality of the kingdom to Jesus' message,

social gospelers held that Jesus' message, could never again be properly understood as anything less than social. Robert Handy says:

> The social gospel commentators. . . believed that modern historical scholarship had permitted for the first time a relatively accurate exegesis of Jesus' most characteristic phrase. In their minds, this recovery put to rest all attempts to interpret Jesus' teachings in a purely individual and other worldly fashion. . . (1966:63).

Inherent within the historical study of scripture, particularly the recovery of the kingdom ideal, however, was a problematic with which social gospelers would have to reckon. The historicization of the life and message of Jesus that resulted from the work of scholars like Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer raised more questions than it answered. Rather than affirm the liberal-social interpretation of the kingdom, the historical study of scripture brought to light an understanding of Jesus' vision of the kingdom as one that was radically apocalyptic.

Schweitzer's work challenged the liberal biographies of Jesus in general, and showed the problems of a historical approach to the life of Jesus from a perspective other than Jesus' own age and culture, that of first century Judaism. Both Weiss and Schweitzer concluded that, from the perspective of first century Judaism, "apocalypticism was the primary source for understanding the ministry and teaching of Jesus" (Kee, 1970:26). Biblical scholarship concerning the quest for the historical Jesus concluded that the outlook of Jesus was radically apocalyptic and apocalypticism constituted the medium in which the message of the kingdom was formulated (Kee, 1970:132).

In his study, *Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, Weiss held that there was no evidence that Jesus understood the kingdom as a progressive reality, beginning in his own age. Rather, according to Weiss, he looked for an imminent and catastrophic end to his age and the establishment of a new creation at the end of the age which would be inaugurated solely by God. Weiss held that Jesus himself did not initiate the kingdom but only heralded its coming and gave his life to hasten its arrival, expecting to return again to rule as the Son of Man.

In *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, Schweitzer, like Weiss, held that Jesus was a man of his own time and the product of Jewish apocalypticism. For Schweitzer, Jesus mistakenly understood the end of his present age, the coming of the kingdom as imminent, and his own death as the beginning of the long line of expected apocalyptic tribulations. According to Schweitzer, Jesus had no interest in his present social order or the establishment of an ethical code. Rather, he

offered a radical but interim ethic for the time until his coming at the end of the present order.[67]

Social gospelers parted company with the historical conclusions of Weiss, Schweitzer and the History of Religions School. Rauschenbusch responded to the apocalyptization of the kingdom with criticism. In *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, he critiques an apocalyptic interpretation of the kingdom on scholarly grounds. He argues that the apocalyptic sayings are later accretions of the early church and, as such, are largely absent from the Q source. Rauschenbusch points out:

> Ordinary critical analysis eliminates a good deal of eschatological material as later accretions. The earliest of the documentary sources of the gospels, 'Q' contains the least. . . . [Quoting Harnack, Rauschenbusch says:] 'The tendency to exaggerate the apocalyptic and eschatological elements in our Lord's message and to subordinate to this the. . . religious and ethical elements, will ever find its refutation in Q' (1917:219).

Rauschenbusch argues that a developing understanding of the kingdom on the part of Jesus indicates the growth of his own understanding out of an inherited apocalypticism to an organic and evolutionary understanding of the kingdom. For Rauschenbusch:

> We see the whole situation incorrectly when we tacitly assume that the ideas of Jesus were uniform throughout his teaching ministry. If we take the doctrine of his real humanity seriously, he was a growing personality, and his ideas were in the making. . . . It is vital to this problem to know in what direction Jesus was working, into apocalypticism or out of it. We can see that he began with a Jewish horizon and broke his way into a world-wide and human world. How about his eschatology? His earliest parables are a decisive answer. . . . He took his illustrations from organic life to express the idea of the gradual growth of the Kingdom. He was shaking off catastrophic ideas and substituting developmental ideas. John [the Baptizer] had put the judgment at the beginning of the Messiah's work; Jesus pushed it over to the end. In short, apocalypticism was part of the environment in which he began his thinking; it was not his personal product; he was emancipating himself from it. This is essential (TSG, 1917:220).

Rauschenbusch was certainly influenced by the evolutionary thinking of his own age and his interpretation of Jesus' understanding of the kingdom reflects

this. Rauschenbusch was also following mainstream biblical scholarship of the late nineteenth century. C.H. Hopkins points out that,

> In thus rejecting the apocalyptic interpretation of the teaching of Jesus, the Brotherhood [in which Rauschenbusch participated prominently] was following the accepted New Testament scholarship of the day. . . . Shailer Mathews . . . [in] *The Social Teachings of Jesus* (1897) . . . [held that] while Jesus could not have been expected to use the word evolution in reference to his kingdom. . . the concept of development was essentially what he had in mind (1938:148).

The social gospel's liberal understanding of the personality of Jesus further prevented an interpretation in which Jesus' own understanding was misguided. Robert Handy points out:

> . . . they were still constrained by the liberal assumption that Jesus must have been an original creative spirit whose unique personality was the prime source of revelation. The conclusion thus followed that since the apocalyptic expectation proved misguided, Jesus could not a priori have accepted it (1966:70).

These critical considerations played an important part in Rauschenbusch's rejection of the apocalyptization of the kingdom. However, Rauschenbusch's argument with the apocalyptization of the kingdom may be seen to be more deeply centered in the very nature and goal of his work.

Rauschenbusch attempted to mediate a social understanding of scripture to his day in the interests of providing a Christian foundation for the work of social regeneration. For Rauschenbusch, the kingdom was not a reality which broke into human history at the end of time, but one that progressed in history as a force for the transformation of the social order enabling the full salvation of the race. History was the arena of human salvation and the medium in which the kingdom developed. Max Stackhouse points out that for Rauschenbusch,

> It is history wherein God reveals his will for man, and where man experiences the holy. . . . History is the drama of man's struggles with the forces and spirits of good and evil (1968:28).

The nature of the kingdom was historical as well as eschatological. For Rauschenbusch, "Jesus was bound up backward and forward and sideward with the life of humanity" (TSG, 1917:245). So too was the kingdom. Rauschenbusch points out that Jesus "never transferred the Kingdom hope from earth to heaven" (Quoted in Handy, 1965:202). For this reason the social gospel is historically

minded, attempting to see in the flow of history the growth of the kingdom. According to Rauschenbusch,

> . . . the social gospel tries to see the progress of the kingdom of God in the flow of history; not only in the doings of the Church, but in the clash of economic forces and social classes, in the rise and fall of despotisms and forms of enslavement, in the rise of new value judgments and fresh canons of moral taste and sentiment, in the elevation or decline of moral standards (TSG, 1917:146).

Placing the kingdom at the end of human history through apocalypticization subverted the radical nature of Jesus' ethic for this world. When the kingdom was pushed to the end of history, Jesus' ethic was understood as an interim ethic until the time of the second coming. In light of the fact that the second coming remains an unfulfilled hope, the interpretation of Jesus' ethic, as an interim ethic, rendered it vulnerable to dismissal as irrelevant. According to Robert Handy, "Rauschenbusch feared that the. . . eschatologists, such as Weiss, by stressing the interim character of Jesus' ethic, might reinforce the prevalent middle class, bourgeois tendency to dismiss Jesus' radical understanding of the kingdom as an irrelevant imperative" (1966:71).

When the kingdom hope was removed from its presence in history, Jesus' ethic lost its fundamentally social orientation and Christian social action lost its foundation in Christian revelation. In *A Theology for the Social Gospel* Rauschenbusch is sharply critical of the apocalypticists precisely for impairing the radically social nature of Jesus' ethic for the present by yoking it with an understanding of the kingdom that is apocalyptic:

> My own conviction is the professional theologians of Europe, who all belong by kinship and sympathy to the bourgeois classes and are constitutionally incapacitated for understanding any revolutionary ideas, past or present, have overemphasized the ascetic and eschatological elements in the teachings of Jesus. They have classed as ascetic or apocalyptic the radical sayings about property and non-resistance which seem to them unpractical or visionary.
>
> . . .
>
> A group of able scholars has put such emphasis on the eschatological sayings of Jesus that he himself has been turned into an apocalyptic enthusiast and the authority of his ethical teaching has been impaired by being yoked with apocalyptic expectations (1917:158).

The kingdom was both a historical and an eschatological ideal. The kingdom was eschatological insofar as it was the goal of history and would be fulfilled by God only at the end of and beyond history. But the kingdom was also a historical ideal, evolving in history, motivating social action and transforming the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of God. As an eschatological hope, the kingdom was the "end to which God [was]. . . lifting the race" (TSG, 1917:140). As a historical hope, the kingdom meant "a growing perfection in the collective life of humanity, in. . . [the] laws [and] in the customs of society. . ." (Brotherhood leaflet, no. 4, 1894).

Both a human and divine enterprise, the kingdom was also both a historical and eschatological vision. In the face of significant scholarly opinion supporting an interpretation of Jesus' understanding of the kingdom as exclusively eschatological, Rauschenbusch held fast to a socio-historical interpretation of the kingdom in which the social nature of Jesus' ethic was safeguarded and the relevance of the Christian message for social action was assured.

Conclusion: A Demythologized Interpretation of the Kingdom of God

In light of current New Testament scholarship, it is recognized today that the interpretation of the social gospel, relative to the apocalyptic context of Jesus' life and preaching of the kingdom, was incorrect.[68] Robert Handy summarizes the historical-critical case against the social gospel interpretation when he says:

> The willingness to cut short the full consideration of alternative historical possibilities was particularly evident in the way they [social gospelers] handled Jesus' relationship with apocalypticism. . . Their failings may more appropriately be said to consist of a somewhat naive belief in the possibility of a presuppositionless historical science, which prevented them from giving due allowance to the fragility of their historical case (1966:77-78).

Weiss and Schweitzer were certainly more accurate in their historical representation of the facts of Jesus' life, and the social context which informed his message than was Rauschenbusch and the social gospel.

However, it is also recognized today, in light of the work of Bultmann and others, that historically the preaching of Jesus and the original Christian message

are couched in a mythological world view, requiring more than historical representation if they are to be fully understood. Bultmann has shown that the scriptural message requires demythologization in the terms of a contemporary understanding if its message is to be understood in the present. Bultmann effected a demythologization of the Christian message in terms of a personalistic, existential anthropology. An existential anthropology and the question of the possibility of authentic existence mediated the Christian message to Bultmann's day as a message of authentic existence.

The logic of Rauschenbusch's method can be seen to evidence the modern understanding that the original Christian message be restated in terms relevant to a contemporary audience if it is to be understood. In the requirement that scripture address the social order, particularly in its injustice and oppression, Rauschenbusch's method demythologizes the biblical understanding of the kingdom in the terms of a contemporary anthropology of solidarity. Although Rauschenbusch was inaccurate in his historical representation of the apocalyptic context of the kingdom and Jesus' understanding of it, his method rightly attempts to mediate to the audience of his day a contemporary understanding of the kingdom hope.

Rauschenbusch's social anthropology makes possible the demythologization of the biblical ideal. Like Bultmann's existential anthropology, it becomes the mediational principle, translating the kingdom's meaning into the present through a contemporary understanding of human existence as social. If the reality of the kingdom for the prophets, Jesus and the early Christian communities was social, be it the restoration of the nation of Israel or the imminent return of Jesus as Lord of a new social order, the reality of the kingdom for today becomes the hope for the regeneration of the social orders for the salvation of the race as a whole. A specific example of Rauschenbusch's social demythologization can be seen in his interpretation of the importance of the early church's apocalyptic stance vis-a-vis the kingdom and his translation of that stance into a social stance for today. Handy, quoting Rauschenbusch, places Rauschenbusch's statements in the context of a demythologizing method when he says, for Rauschenbusch,

> The early hope that Christ would return soon was significant. . . 'Expectancy was the true pose of Christians. Under the conditions of that time this was their way of declaring that the Kingdom of God is the highest good and that all our life should be concentrated on it.' That sense of expectancy must be translated into a social hope. By so doing we can 'still have a religious sense of a great and divine future

> overhanging humanity which will give to our life the same value and solemnity which the first generation felt' (1966:70).

Biblical scholarship today does not give as much weight to the apocalyptic influence in Jesus' preaching of the kingdom as it did at the time of Weiss and Schweitzer. Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza points out that,

> Exegetes agree that it is the mark of Jesus' preaching and ministry that he proclaimed the basileia of God as future and present, eschatological vision and experiential reality. This characteristic tension between future and present, between wholeness and brokenness is generally acknowledged, even though it is interpreted or resolved differently (1983:120).

If the substantive inaccuracy of Rauschenbusch's interpretation is modified by a more balanced critical perspective today, vis-a-vis the future and present reality of the kingdom as Jesus preached it, Rauschenbusch's demythologization of the kingdom in terms of an evolutionary progressivism must be seen as completely inaccurate from a scriptural perspective. Even though he did not hold that the development of the kingdom through history was an even progression, without failure or setback, he did interpret the kingdom in terms of positivist progressivism.[69] Waldo Beach summarizes the logic of the progressivist ethical stance, which informed Rauschenbusch's interpretation, when he says:

> The bow of moral effort was bent by the tension between the present and the future. What sustained moral energy was the confidence that the present was superior to the past so the future would realize what was still now unfulfilled (1951:130).

Unlike Rauschenbusch's social demythologization of the kingdom, his progressivist bias finds no support in scripture and is negated by human experience.

Today some aspects of Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the kingdom are dated. However, his attempt to mediate a contemporary understanding of the kingdom by means of a social understanding of human existence is fundamentally current. His method and anthropology effect a contemporary social demythologization of the kingdom that historical representation by itself could not accomplish. His method issues in a contemporary understanding of the kingdom that, although marred by inaccuracy, vis-a-vis its original historical setting, is not unfaithful to the kerygmatic center of the kingdom hope and

remains relevant for today. There is after all no observation more relevant to our own contemporary social situation or a present commitment to social justice than Ronald White's observation concerning the goal of Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the kingdom for his own day. White says:

> It was the corporate nature of the Kingdom, both in terms of social sin and social salvation, that found a theological basis upon which to attack poverty and every other social, economic and political issue (1978:55).

In the encounter with those who would apocalyptize the kingdom, Rauschenbusch evidenced his commitment to a social interpretation of the kingdom. If his method safeguarded the nature of Jesus' ethic as a social ethic, and insured the connection between the Christian message and social action, it also mediated a socially demythologized understanding of the kingdom that bears relevance for social and theological reflection today.

IV.

SOLIDARITY AND THE SOCIAL ORDER: RAUSCHENBUSCH'S CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM AND AN ETHIC FOR THE SOCIAL ORDER

The ethic of Walter Rauschenbusch grows out of and is determined by his understanding of the social order as an organic whole. It is a social ethic for the social order: it not only rests on a social, solidaristic understanding of the nature of human existence but it is directed to the entire social order as well as to individual Christians in society or to the Christian community alone. It includes both a critique of the social order and a program for its reformation. Rauschenbusch's social ethic is focused specifically on the economic order of his day as the "key" to the Christianization of the whole social order. Unlike the other structures of society -- the family, church, education, and government -- Rauschenbusch perceived the economic order to be largely unchristian. The economic order required regeneration if society and individual alike were to be saved. Rauschenbusch proposed a regeneration of economic structures on the anthropological basis of a social, solidaristic understanding of human society leading to a more just and a more Christian society. An anthropology of solidarity guides the formulation of his ethic.

Rauschenbusch's social ethic is closely related to his reading of scripture. Rauschenbusch's ethic represents the fulfillment of his requirement that the Christian message speak to the social order if the message of salvation is to be offered to individuals in the social order at all. Rauschenbusch's ethic, informed by his social reading of scripture, shows what Christian imperatives have to be in response to the question of the possibility of a Christian existence for all in the face of social structures of injustice and oppression.

Methodologically, Rauschenbusch reads scripture in terms of his social theory, an anthropology of solidarity. Scripture's social norms are translated and mediated to the social order of his day in the language and values of a social anthropology of solidarity, issuing in an ethic for the social order. If scripture's norms are informed by the language of a contemporary social ethic, Rauschenbusch's ethic, in turn, is infused with Christian symbol and motivation. If the prophets, Jesus and the early Christian communities are seen to live by principles of social justice, fraternity and cooperation, economic structures of justice, fraternity and cooperation, in Rauschenbusch's ethic, are offered as expressions of the fulfillment of the Christian imperative to love.

Rauschenbusch's ethic, like his interpretation of the kingdom and the Christian doctrines, is the result of a hermeneutical strategy that is circular and mediational. He can be seen to move from the experience of his own day, with its question of an equitable existence for all, to a reading of scripture and retrieval of its social perspective, back to his own day, in the terms of a contemporary anthropology of solidarity. The circular structure of Rauschenbusch's hermeneutical method is guided all the way by his social anthropology. An anthropology of solidarity bridges the distance between the horizons of scripture and the social order of his day. Human existence as social existence becomes the hermeneutical principle translating Christianity's message and the Christian imperative to love as an imperative to social love committed to the regeneration of the social order for the salvation of all.

The following chapter is divided into four sections. The first section, through selected examples of Rauschenbusch's interpretation of scripture, examines his retrieval of scripture's socio-ethical norms by means of his anthropology of solidarity. The second section examines Rauschenbusch's critique of the social order, specifically the economic order, as it is structured by the industrial capitalism of his day. The third section examines his program of Christianization for the social order as it is formulated in the language and values of a biblically informed anthropology of solidarity. The concluding section shows Rauschenbusch's ethic to issue in a radically socialized interpretation of the Christian imperative to love as an imperative to social action for the regeneration and Christianization of the social order. It considers the implications of Rauschenbusch's social interpretation of the Christian imperative for a modern commitment to social justice.

Christian Foundations for a Social Ethic

In light of the social situation of his day, Rauschenbusch turned to the Christian sources with the question of the possibility of an equitable and humane existence for all. Rauschenbusch's reading of scripture, carried out from the perspective of his social concerns and social theory of human solidarity, issued in a social interpretation of the message of the prophets, Jesus and the early church. He sought to translate scripture's social norms into a social imperative for the society of his day. In *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912) Rauschenbusch speaks implicitly of his method vis-a-vis a Christian social ethic when he says:

> The solidarity of mankind was the great conviction underneath all of [Christ's]. . . teachings.
>
> These fundamental utterances of the mind of Christ are the supreme law of Christendom. . . . The chief business of Christian men today is to translate them into terms large enough to make them fully applicable to modern social life (327-328).

In Rauschenbusch's ethic, scripture's norms become authoritative not only for Christian life, but, informed by a contemporary social understanding of human existence, authoritative for the contemporary social order as well. No less a critic of the social gospel and Rauschenbusch than Reinhold Niebuhr has pointed out that,

> . . . one of the genuine achievements of Rauschenbusch and the whole social gospel. . . was to rediscover the prophets as teachers of social righteousness. . . . the social gospel. . . recogniz[ed]. . . the importance of the prophetic insistence on social righteousness and. . . collective morality. That insistence makes the Old Testament a perpetual resource for a Christian social ethic and raises the question whether. . . ethics. . . can ever develop an adequate social ethic if it neglects Old Testament prophetism (1958:531).

A brief overview of Rauschenbusch's reading of both Old and New Testament shows him to retrieve the socio-ethical norms of the prophets, Jesus and the early Christian communities through an anthropology of solidarity

Rauschenbusch interprets the message of the prophets as a reforming social ethic. The prophets speak out of a horizon of solidarity because the religious life of Israel rests on the self-understanding of the nation as one. If the prophets

testify to the fact that ethical conduct is the "supreme and sufficient religious act," (CSC, 1907:8), it is not a private ethic to which they refer but a "public morality [for it is that] on which the national life is founded" (CSC, 1907:9). Rauschenbusch believes the prophets to have anticipated the modern organic conception of human life:

> The prophets were not religious individualists. During the classical times of prophetism they always dealt with Israel and Judah as organic totalities. They conceived of their people as a gigantic personality which sinned as one and ought to repent as one. . . . they anticipated a modern conception which now underlies our scientific comprehension of social development and on which modern historical studies are based (CSC, 1907:9).

The prophetic castigation of a wealthy aristocracy in the name of the poor, according to Rauschenbusch, historically evolved out of the situation in which, a wealthy class arose and in time accrued large portions of the land, thereby depriving many small landowners of the material basis of their lives. Rauschenbusch explains that,

> This rapid increase in wealth, with the usual unequal distribution of it, set in during the forty years preceding Amos. . . . Amos. . . was the first of the great prophets. . . . [T]he championship of the poor by the prophets was not due to the inflow of novel social ideals, but to the survival of nobler conceptions to which they clung in the face of the distorted social conditions created by the new commercialism [of their age] (CSC, 1907:15-16).

The Mosaic Law, like the prophets, understood the land to belong to the people as a solidaristic whole. It was owned by the families who tilled it rather than wealthy proprietors who hired landless laborers. "Thus the Law, like the preaching of the prophets," according to Rauschenbusch, "manifests a striking sympathy for the poorer classes and an unflagging respect for their equal humanity" (CSC, 1907:21).

The social values of Israel made possible the development of its extraordinary religious life as surely as its religious life sustained its social values. Rauschenbusch argues:

> We rightly hold that social ideals of such moral value could grow only out of a religious life of high value. But the reverse is also historically true: that the high religious life of

> Israel could develop only within a nation that cherished and maintained such social ideals (CSC, 1907:23).

It was only with the exile that the religious life of Israel turned from its social outlook to an introspective concern with personal holiness. However, according to Rauschenbusch, even with the prophets of the exile, the restoration of the nation as a whole remained the goal of religion; personal holiness became but the prerequisite for national restoration:

> However individualistic religion became, it never abandoned the collective hope as the real consummation of religion. . . The tense personal obedience to the minutiae of the Law in post-exilic Judaism was only the condition for the full blessing of God on the nation. Jehovah was always the God of an organized society and not of a disconnected mass of individuals (CSC, 1907:34-35).

Only because the religious life of Israel was grounded in and grew with its social and political life was Israel able to make the religious contribution of an ethical monotheism to the life of humankind (CSC, 1907:26-27).

Rauschenbusch's reading of the New Testament likewise renders the message of Jesus and the practice of the early church social expressions reflective of the solidaristic nature of human existence. For Rauschenbusch, "The union of religion and ethics reached its highest perfection in the life and mind of Jesus" (TSG, 1917:14). Although Jesus did not develop a program of social reform, his ethic is a social one because it is founded on a social understanding of human existence. According to Rauschenbusch:

> Jesus did not teach any economic or political doctrine of land or labor or private property. He did not approach questions from the scientific or political end. He was deeply concerned in the relation of man to men. He says nothing about capitalism, but he does speak about justice and covetousness; nothing on Socialism, but everything on solidarity and honest work. ("Address to Young Women's Christian Association," 1910:7).

Rauschenbusch understands the communities of the early church to offer models of communal life based on a social understanding of human existence. Love, solidarity, cooperation and mutual service structured their communal existence:

> The primitive Christian churches were not ecclesiastical organizations so much as fraternal communities. They withdrew their members from the social life outside and organized a complete social life within. . . Their organization. . . was devised to meet social and moral, rather than religious and doctrinal needs. Their income was completely devoted to fraternal help. An organization for mutual help and fraternal cooperation, the Christian churches became indispensable to the city population and invincible by the government (CSC, 1907:141).

In the end, historical study of the bible reveals it to be a great social document, yielding social principles that can be translated for the contemporary social order. Rauschenbusch says:

> As the Bible becomes more lifelike it becomes more social. We used to see the sacred landscape through allegorical interpretation. . . very much apart from our everyday modern life. The Bible hereafter will be the 'people's book' in a new sense. For the first time in religious history we have the possibility of so directing religious energy by scientific knowledge that a comprehensive and continuous reconstruction of social life in the name of God is within the bounds of human possibility (CSC, 1907:209).

Historical study of scripture shows social reconstruction in the name of God to be possible because Rauschenbusch construes a social anthropology to inform the heart of the biblical message. Historical study shows that what is fundamentally human is also fundamentally biblical. James Gustafson makes the point well when he says that in Rauschenbusch's interpretation, to appeal to Jesus' teaching is to affirm what is most fundamental in human nature, the orientation toward cohesion or solidarity. Gustafson explains:

> When we violate our deepest social instincts we are violating the teachings of the scripture about universal justice in the coming Kingdom of God; we are violating the teachings of Jesus. But the teaching and deeds of Jesus relate to these instincts, 'None ever felt this social unity of our race more deeply than Jesus. . . He put his personality behind the natural instinct of social attraction and encouraged it.' Jesus was in effect reinforcing our nature, our deepest and best social experiences and sensibilities. Thus to appeal to his teaching as a norm by which to judge what is unjust in our circumstances around us is not to appeal to an alien norm, to principles which have authority because in some sense they are

> 'revealed', it is to appeal to something that is deepest within us, our sense of solidarity with the whole family of man (1969:165-166).

Rauschenbusch can thus rightly say: "Christianizing means humanizing in the highest sense" (CSO, 1912:125).[70]

Rauschenbusch retrieves the social dimension of scripture's norms by means of an anthropology of solidarity. The principle of solidarity guides his reading of scripture and the mediation of scripture's ethical perspective into a foundation for his social ethic. In speaking of the work of contemporaries like Schaffle and Boardman, Rauschenbusch speaks of his own interpretation of scripture and its foundational relation for his contemporary social ethic:

> The power of association and cohesion was implanted by the spirit of God; its theory was formulated by Paul in his illustration of the body and its members, an illustration so true that men like Schaffle and Dr. G.D. Boardman, in developing a theory of a true social life, could do no better than to unfold that illustration in detail ("Ideals of the Social Reformers," (1896:210).

Rauschenbusch's Critique of Industrial Capitalism

Rauschenbusch's analysis of the social order, particularly that of the economic order structured by industrial capitalism, is a structural critique carried out in terms of a biblically informed, contemporary anthropology of solidarity.

Rauschenbusch understands the condition of human solidarity to imply the interdependent nature of all human existence. Human beings are not only connected to the past and future through inheritance and influence but contribute to and are formed by the social order in which they live. Human lives are not only "related to one another like cells of a living organism" ("Corporate Life of Humanity," 1896:4), but are determined for good or ill, in large part, by the institutions and social orders which structure their lives. The social order has a powerful and determinitive influence on the life of each individual within it. Rauschenbusch points out that,

> . . . those who have learned to understand the organic unity of society know how profoundly the individual is conditioned in all his

> acts and thoughts by the social life that makes and molds him, and sets his goal and limits (CSO, 1912:200).

The industrial revolution of Rauschenbusch's own age brought solidarity's implications to the fore as had no other revolution. Rauschenbusch says:

> Steam and electricity are drawing society together and compacting it . . . The welfare of the individual is becoming increasingly dependent on social action and social construction.
> . . .
> Humanity is drawing together by a thousand forces. And as vibrations travel fastest through the densest bodies, so the moral movements of the social atom communicate themselves most quickly in the most social society (RK, 1891:171, 245).

For Rauschenbusch there existed a need for the recognition of the interdependence of human life and a consequent restructuring of social institutions in light of a Christian anthropology of solidarity. He concludes: "It is one of the pressing duties of religious men to insist on this fact of solidarity and press its ethical importance home to the conscience of every man" (RK, 1891:245).

Rauschenbusch's perspective of solidarity growing out of his own experiences and reading of scripture led him to the belief that, "A full salvation demands a Christian social order which will serve as the spiritual environment of the individual" (CSO, 1912:17). Thus Rauschenbusch believed the Christian message was required to address the evils of the social order if the individual was to be saved in every sense of the word and the kingdom extended. In *Righteousness of the Kingdom*, Rauschenbusch argues that the salvation of the individual and the extension of the kingdom require not saved individuals but a saved social order. He concludes:

> In short; the efforts for the extension of the Kingdom of God are insufficient if they address themselves to the individual alone. A world of regenerated individuals is not necessarily a regenerated world. The laws of nations, the customs of societies, the institutions of corporate life, though directly affected by every personal change, may perpetually wrong and warp the individuals, and a conscious effort must be made to reconstruct them. . . (RK, 1891:105).

Rauschenbusch believed the church had failed to produce an adequate Christian ethic insofar as it had failed to produce an ethic for the social order.[71] Rauschenbusch points out:

> A new need has arisen for Christian teachings, and the church is very slow to respond. . . . Christianity has fairly penetrated the simpler relations of individual and family life with its ethical ideas. But the more complex relations of industrial and political affairs have not yet been so penetrated, and the church is so far from making a Christian public morality effective that it is not even approximately clear in its own mind what a Christian public morality would be. Schaffle says in his great work. . . *The Formation and Life of the Social Organism*: 'A true public morality has not yet come into effect. If. . . a public morality for public relations really prevailed today. . . then entire classes of people would not be abandoned to wretchedness. . . The chief source of social misery at present is. . . that a public morality for the more complex affairs does not exist . . .' (RK, 1891:171).

In *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907) Rauschenbusch concludes: "it is a fact that there has been a startling absence of any thorough and far-reaching determination or effort to transform and Christianize the social order" (157). In *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912) he calls for the churches "to develop an adequate public morality" and one based on "an ideal of salvation for the organic life of society" (100). Based on an understanding of the nature of human existence as one of solidarity and a social reading of scripture Rauschenbusch offers a revised Christian ethic for the social order of his day.

Rauschenbusch's social ethic embodies a critique and a program of reformation. Both critique and program of reformation focus on the economic order as it is structured by the industrialized capitalism of his day. It is a structural analysis of the institutions of the economic order in light of a biblically informed anthropology of solidarity. It is to Rauschenbusch's critique of the economic order that we now turn.

Rauschenbusch understood large sections of society -- namely, the family, organized religion, education and the democratic institutions of the country -- to have been largely Christianized,[72] while the economic order remained unchristian. Rauschenbusch's critique focuses on the economic order as an unchristian segment of society which, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, pervaded the life of the nation and determined the lives of individuals in a way no other social segment of society did. In a discussion of

government and political life in the United States after the Civil War to the turn of the century, the historians D.M. Kennedy and T.A. Baily summarize the pervasive nature of the economic order when they say:

> As the nineteenth century drew to a close [politically, with a string of 'forgettable' presidents -- Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur and Cleveland] observers were asking 'Why are the best men not in politics?' One answer was that they had been lured away from public life by the lusty attractions of industrial economy. Talented men ached for profits, not the presidency; they dreamed of controlling corporations, not Congress. What the nation lost in political leadership, it gained in an astounding surge of economic growth. Though still in many ways a political dwarf, the United States was about to stand up before the world as an industrial colossus (1986:269).

The business life of the country was the life of the country. Rauschenbusch rightly considered the Christianization of the economic order the "key" to the Christianization of the whole social order. Industrial capitalism so dominated the society of Rauschenbusch's day that he understood the social order to be determined by a capitalistic ethos:

> The business class today is our ruling class, and their practical code of honor and morals in business is becoming the code of all. . . . the materialistic spirit of Capitalism is. . . conforming our conscience to its standards (CSO, 1912:318).

Rauschenbusch's structural analysis of the economic order, specifically industrial capitalism, shows capitalism to have created structures of injustice and oppression throughout society. Although Rauschenbusch recognizes that capitalism has enabled industry to harness great resources, his analysis concludes that in capitalism structures of sinful selfishness have prevailed over structures of human solidarity. Capitalism created great wealth for a few while large sections of society suffered in poverty and want making for a crisis Rauschenbusch believed threatened to destroy the very life of the country. Charles Strain argues that Rauschenbusch's critical analysis is itself a social theory, unmasking an ideology of the survival of the fittest (1978a:27). He further argues that a structural analysis forms the center of Rauschenbusch's critique showing that, in capitalism, structures of selfishness destroy the social cohesion and interdependence which is necessary for the survival of human life and society.[73] Strain summarizes Rauschenbusch's analysis when he says:

> Structural analysis ultimately served to disclose the lines of confrontation. The spirit of selfishness versus the spirit of love; the rapacious pursuit of private interest versus obedience to the moral law of the universe. Death versus life (1978b:535).[74]

Rauschenbusch's critique of industrial capitalism is aimed at four specific aspects of its system: its competitive nature, its profit motive, its organization into monopolies and corporate structures, and its commitment to private profit at the expense of the common good.

Rauschenbusch's critique centers on capitalism rather than industrialization. For Rauschenbusch, industrialism had harnessed resources and produced great material benefits. Although the tendency to combine human labor into efficient association was in progress before the advent of the machine, the rise of industrialism helped organize human energies into positive associations of labor and "in so far as our present economic order is simply the perfecting of human association, Christianity can have no quarrel with it" (CSO, 1912:163). Rather it is capitalism and its competitive organization of industrialization that is the focus of Rauschenbusch's critique.

Competition

Competition, the first law of capitalism, is the first aspect of the economic order Rauschenbusch critiques. Capitalist structures of competition destroy the mutuality of human existence obtaining from human solidarity. The competitive struggle creates an environment in which fear reigns and the most ruthless set the pace for all (CSO, 1912:174). In this environment good men are required to forego justice and mercy in the interests of survival. Rauschenbusch argues that,

> Workmen complain when their employers speed up the machinery which compels them to keep up with its pace or be hurt. But their employers are also slaves of a hunger machine and many of them are seeking with laboring breath to keep up with a treadmill that will mangle them if they do not (CSO, 1912:174).

Competition can be seen to be wasteful of human energies and human products, precisely because it destroys human association and interdependence

(CSO, 1912:237). In the economic order, competition is not only unchristian, it retards the progress of civilization. Although Rauschenbusch recognizes the value of fair competition as a stimulus to excellence in other areas of life, in the economic order it violates the material interdependence of society and threatens the well-being of all.

In the final analysis, competition returns society to a past age in which the "law of tooth and nail" was supreme:

> Competition as a principle is a denial of fraternity. Insofar as it is allowed to do its unrestrained work, it establishes the law of tooth and nail, and brings back the age of savage warfare where every man's hand is against every man. It dechristianizes the social order (CSO, 1912:179).

Profit Motive

The profit motive is the second aspect of the capitalist economic order Rauschenbusch critiques. Capitalism is structured so that private profit rather than the quality of the products made or the interests of those served motivates production. The profit motive dominates the life of the nation insofar as it dominates the structures of the economic order (CSO, 1912:233).

Although Rauschenbusch does not critique profit as "fair reward which society owes for useful labor and service" (CSO, 1912:226), he critiques it as sole motive for labor and service. As the sole motive of enterprise it leads to a disregard for the welfare of those in need of the products and services rendered, and subordinates human life to private gain (CSO, 1912:205). Profit as the sole motive of production ultimately undermines the common good and destroys the trust between producer and consumer.

Profit as motive has no interest in meeting human need but every interest in creating human want in the form of new markets. Capitalism creates new markets first in the interests of the common good (CSO, 1912: 210). Rauschenbusch concludes:

> The dominant motive is not to supply human needs, but to make a profit for those who operate the system. . . . The manifold forms of dishonesty. . . that we meet in business is based almost wholly on individual selfishness and hardly at all on fraternity or solidarity (CSO, 1912: 214).

Rauschenbusch specifically condemns unearned profit, i.e, profit derived from benefits belonging to the community as a whole. The possibility of unearned profit arises only in a highly interdependent social order where production, but not profit, has been socialized (CSO, 1912: 226). Unearned profit divests the community of its benefits or steals from labor the just rewards of its effort. It is profit taken unjustly from many. Unearned profit is derived from many sources: low wages, high rents, high rates on money lent, properties withheld until the time of maximum need, income from private ownership of natural resources and monopoly prices. Rauschenbusch characterizes unearned profit as "a tribute levied by power" against all (CSO, 1912: 226).

Monopolies/Corporate Structures

If competitive structures motivated by profit are seen by Rauschenbusch to disrupt the social fabric and undermine human solidarity, the development of corporate structures in the form of monopolies and trusts are understood to threaten the freedom and equality of the country's life and political democracy. During the late nineteenth century, corporations exerted a semi-tyrannical influence over both nation and government. Private corporations sought and obtained special legal privileges, protection against competitors, grants of public land, natural resources, franchise rights, and patent monopolies (CSO, 1912: 274). Private corporate wealth and privilege placed so much power in the hands of a small group, not elected or accountable to the people, that the private wishes of a few threatened to become the law of the land. Rauschenbusch summarizes the situation of his day when he says:

> A community of equals. . .usually succeeds in protecting itself against the selfishness of its members and establishes a rough justice of paying and getting. The danger begins when any individual, or any organized group, becomes so strong that they can defy or paralyze the organization[s] that serve. . . the common good . . . (CSO, 1912: 273).
>
> . . .
>
> It would be possible to assemble around one table a number of gentlemen who could control the bulk of the mobile wealth of a nation of ninety million souls. . . The safety and welfare of the

> nation is at their mercy and depends on their respect for the law and their concern for the public good (CSO, 1912: 287).

The corporate structures not only threatened the democratic processes of the nation but were seen to separate society into unequal classes. As capitalistic structures, they disallowed workers any possibility of ownership in their shops or a just share of the profits they produced. Ownership and control remained in the hands of investors and money lenders. Investor profit rather than labor welfare was the basis on which decisions were made.

The corporate structures interposed themselves between the classes of labor and management in a way which permitted no human contact. Rauschenbusch characterizes the corporation as an "absentee" landlord (CSO, 1912: 185) alienating labor by its vastness, impersonality and autonomy. He defines it as an "artificial person, begotten by. . . Law, a vast being composed of many individuals. . . created for profit. . . without soul. . . [or] heart. . . towering among us as the skyscraper" (CSO, 1912: 184). Corporate structures of capitalism destroyed the fabric of the human society, controlling government and exploiting labor and community in the interests of private profit.

Private Profit versus the Common Good

Finally, Rauschenbusch critiques the very nature and spirit of capitalism as one which sets private profit over the common good. Rauschenbusch cites examples from all areas of business in which private gain is set above and achieved at the expense of the health, safety, and lives of the innocent, the working class and the community. Rauschenbusch's criticism focuses especially on those instances in which labor and the community have been unprotected from industrial disease and accident and threatened with loss of job and even life, because of management's refusal to sacrifice profit in the interests of the welfare of the workers or the community. For Rauschenbusch, the necessity for reformation is clear:

> The self-interest of the individual is a necessary part of human nature and may be a beneficent force in human society. . . . But when a theory of so called economic individualism has resulted in turning the property of a nation over to a limited group; in equipping them with rights and powers which only the community

> should wield; in pitting the self-interest of the most resourceful men against the public welfare; in giving them power to hold up the progress of humanity by extorting monopoly profits; in cowing public opinion, persecuting the truth tellers, and hog-tying the state, -- then that theory has gone to seed and it is time to plow the ground for a new crop. . . .the overgrowth of private interests has institutionalized an unchristian principle. . . we must reverse the line of movement if we want to establish the law of Christ (CSO, 1912: 290).

In Rauschenbusch's analysis and critique of the economic order of his day, structures of sinful selfishness are seen to have undermined human solidarity and created social conditions of poverty and destitution. Although industrialization is understood to have created great material benefits, the system of capitalism is seen to have allotted these benefits only to a ruthless few. For Rauschenbusch, "No preventatives against the formation of social classes written in a paper constitution can long save us from the iron wedge which capitalism drives through society (CSC, 1907: 219). The "case of Christianity against capitalism" is the division of society into unequal classes based on the unjust distribution of wealth. For Rauschenbusch,

> A small group of great wealth and power is set over against a large group of propertyless men. Given this line-up, the rest follows with the inevitableness of a process in physics or chemistry (CSO, 1912: 311).

The two-class system generated by capitalism necessarily eventuates in poverty, oppression and strife because the wealth created by all is not socialized but reaped only by a few. Here poverty becomes the necessary corollary of wealth. Rauschenbusch argues:

> If some have more than they earn, others must have less than they earn. . . . Where Dives is, Lazarus must be too (RK, 1891: 222).[75]

In the final analysis, capitalism created an environment in which rich and poor alike were unable to live a Christian and humane life.[76] If an equitable and humane life was to be offered as a possibility to all, the social order, particularly the economic structures of capitalism, required regeneration.[77] Structures of collectivity and cooperation were needed if the social order was to be christianized.

The second part of Rauschenbusch's ethic constitutes guidelines for the regeneration and Christianization of the economic structures of society. Rauschenbusch's program of reformation, like his critique, is carried out in the terms of a biblically informed anthropology of solidarity.

Rauschenbusch's Christian Social Ethic

Rauschenbusch's social ethic can be seen as the attempt to show what the Christian imperatives have to be if a just social order is to be achieved. Rauschenbusch's ethic is not only a social ethic, it is also a Christian ethic. His ethic mediates scripture's imperatives to the social order in the contemporary language of an anthropology of solidarity.

Rauschenbusch defines the Christianization of the social order as the attempt to bring the social order into harmony with the ethical convictions of Christ (CSO, 1912: 125). In Rauschenbusch's interpretation, the fundamental ethical conviction of Christ was the solidarity of humankind. Rauschenbusch's social ethic proposes structures of cooperation and collectivity as the material basis for the enhancement of human solidarity and the enablement of the fullest possible expression of Christian justice and love. The social order becomes Christianized when "it is organized to furnish the material foundation for love and solidarity by knitting men together through common aims and united work, by making the material welfare of each dependent on the efficiency, moral vigor, and good will of all" (CSO, 1912: 328). If the disruption of solidarity by capitalistic structures of competition promotes systematic poverty, exploitation and antagonism, the enhancement of solidarity by economic structures of cooperation and collectivity promotes justice, equality and love, that is, the growth of the kingdom in history.

Rauschenbusch's Christian social ethic draws lines of evolution along which the entire social order must progress if the possibility of a humane and Christian existence is to be offered to all (CSO, 1912: 331). This becomes possible when the social order "leave[s] inhumanity behind and recognize[s] the worth. . . and . . . solidarity of mankind" (CSO, 1912: 331).

Justice

The first line of evolution along which society must move and the fundamental requirement of Rauschenbusch's ethic is the requirement of justice. Justice is the prerequisite of Rauschenbusch's ethic because it enables relations of solidarity foundational to a Christian social order: "When injustice becomes widespread and permanent, it undoes the Christian character of the social order because it makes human solidarity impossible between the. . . classes concerned, and because it deprives. . . them of their full Christian manhood" (CSO, 1912: 334).

According to Rauschenbusch's analysis, because justice has not structured the institutions of the social order, private charity has been left the burden of alleviating the effects of poverty. Because the poverty of large sections of society has not been created by private fault, but by systematized injustice on a large scale, the private means of charity are not adequate to the social nature of the problem. The solution requires regenerated structures of economic justice. Rauschenbusch argues:

> The fault in our modern charity is that love is made to do the work of justice, an upside-down arrangement which makes even the simple precepts of Jesus appear unwise and impracticable (RK, 1891: 228).

Structures of justice not only permit the fullest possible expression of solidarity and love, but are required if solidarity and love are to be expressed at all. For Rauschenbusch, love without justice is not possible:

> . . . Christ's commandment of love presupposes the world's commandment of justice. Justice is the foundation on which love can build its temple. Unless that foundation is there, the walls will crack. . . . Working men are fond of saying: 'We want justice not charity.' It is a good saying. Perhaps it would be better to say: 'First justice, then charity.' After justice has been done, there will still be ample room for love, and then it will be love indeed and not charity.' This demand the lower classes have a right to make. . . 'First give us what is ours by justice; then if you wish to do anything for us from love, we shall appreciate your love. But if you do not love us enough to be just to us, do not call it love' (RK, 1891: 192).

Structures of justice are the first and foundation requirement of Rauschenbusch's Christian social ethic because they enable rightly ordered relations, foundational to a Christian social order.

Collective Ownership

The second line of evolution along which society must move is toward structures of collective ownership of production means. The major division of society, according to Rauschenbusch, is the division between capital and labor. Ownership is concentrated in the hands of capital while labor exists without the possibility of ownership in or control of its work. Labor has no insurance against exploitation, poverty or loss of jobs. Rauschenbusch characterizes this as a situation of injustice:

> No attempt is made to allot to each workman his share in the profits of the joint work. Instead he is paid a fixed wage. The upward movement of this wage is limited by the productiveness of his work; the downward movement. . . by the willingness of the workman to work at so low a return (CSC, 1907: 231).

Rauschenbusch argues that although the workingman may have property, it is property divorced from earning power or production; it is not property in the sense of capital (CSO, 1912: 242). Rauschenbusch proposes that, under modern social conditions of production, property be redefined in social terms: "Property must consist in a share of and a right in a collective accumulation which belongs to a larger group jointly" (CSO, 1912: 343). The worker must have the possibility of being part owner of a large shop or the collective wealth which he/she helps produce when sole ownership of a small shop is not possible:

> The industrial worker needs some property right in the industrial system in which he works. If he cannot be sole owner of a small shop, he must be part owner of a large shop. He must hold some fractional right like that of a shareholder in a joint stock concern (CSO, 1912: 347).

Although Rauschenbusch argues that labor's basic right is to a job, "a secure tenure employment" (CSO, 1912: 347), the focus of his reform is labor's right to a share in the collective wealth and material benefits it helps create,

particularly as insurance against sickness, age and the needs of dependents (CSO, 1912: 350). Collective property rights aid in the provision of the material basis for a humane life for every individual, and economic structures of collectivity are necessary for a Christian social order.

Industrial Democracy

If the wealth of the industrial organizations requires socialization, so does the power. Rauschenbusch calls for structures of industrial democracy as the third line of evolution along which society must move for a Christianized social order. Freedom and equality are necessary for a genuinely fraternal social order: "Men can have no fraternal relations until they face one another with a sense of freedom and of equal humanity" (CSO, 1912: 353). Rauschenbusch calls for a democratic restructuring of industrial relations similar to the political democracy that obtains in American life. He adopts John Stuart Mill's formulation as his own ideal of an industrial democracy:

> The form of association which, if mankind continue to improve, must be expected in the end to predominate, is not that which can exist between a capitalist as chief, and the workpeople without a voice in the management, but the association of the laborers themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers elected and removable by themselves (CSO, 1912: 357).

Rauschenbusch supports a modified Socialism and the labor unions as steps toward the democratization of industry (CSO, 1912: 357).

Equality

Industrial democracy requires the accordance of proximate equality to every individual. Proximate equality for every individual is the fourth direction of evolution along which society must move for a Christian social order. Rauschenbusch argues that although there are differences in individual capacities and abilities, to hold that the enormous inequalities in wealth and property that

now exist fairly reflect human diversities is absurd (CSO, 1912: 364). The differences among individuals is superficial in light of the common humanity which all share and does not support the perpetuation of economic aristocracy or unequal opportunity created by the unequal distribution of property (CSO, 1912: 364). Proximate equality is necessary for a genuinely regenerated social order because "healthful human relations seem to run only on horizontal lines" (CSC, 1907: 247).

Cooperation

Finally, Rauschenbusch calls for a cooperative rather than a competitive organization of the economic order as the fifth line of evolution along which society must move. For Rauschenbusch, cooperative organization is the economic basis of a social order of fraternity and solidarity (CSO, 1912: 366).

Rauschenbusch uses Paul's metaphor of the human body to express his understanding of an ideal social order of solidarity in which cooperation structures the economic life. He says:

> The ideal society, Paul has said, has an unlimited diversity of organs and functions, but a fundamental unity of life, motive and purpose; it is perfect in the measure in which every member has the support and protection of the whole body, and in turn serves the whole in its due place. Paul's philosophy of the Christian church is the highest possible philosophy of human society. The ideal society is an organism, and the Christianizing of the social order must work toward an harmonious cooperation of all individuals for common social ends (CSO, 1912: 366).

Rauschenbusch holds that the cooperative order is the order of the future. The powers of the coming age -- cooperative associations, labor unions and Socialism -- are cooperative structures and reflect the reality of human solidarity. Of the cooperatives Rauschenbusch says:

> . . . the cooperative associations represent a new principle in economic life, clearly of higher ethical quality than the principle dominant in capitalism. They combine a wholesomely selfish desire to get ahead with genuine fraternal sympathy and solidarity (CSO, 1912: 388).

The political philosophy of Mazzini is cited approvingly in support of the premise that the social order must move in the direction of cooperative structures if it is to evolve to a higher, more Christian plane. Paraphrasing Mazzini, Rauschenbusch writes:

> Now. . . we have come to the era of cooperation . . .and association, and all these attempts at combining and associating which we see about us in every sphere of life are only humanity's blind gropings . . . towards the goal which Christ Himself has pointed out to us (Baptist, Congress 8, 1889: 61).

In calling for justice, collective ownership, industrial democracy, proximate equality, and the reorganization of the economic order on cooperative principles, Rauschenbusch offers the path on which society must move if it is to establish the material basis for a Christian social order and the growth of the kingdom of God in its midst. In an effort to more fully concretize the direction of evolution, Rauschenbusch offers some specific recommendations. He holds that the first concern of a Christian social order must be the conservation of all human life. This includes improvements in the living and working conditions of the laboring class. Toward this end he proposes a limitation on the hours of labor, the establishment of a minimum wage, active steps toward the prevention of industrial diseases and accidents, accident insurance, proper housing and care of the sick and aged (CSO, 1912: 241).

Secondly, he proposes the socialization of land and natural resources. According to Rauschenbusch: "If we want to conserve life, we shall have to resocialize property" (CSO, 1912: 419). Property, specifically the land and its resources, must be resocialized in terms of the service it renders to the community and the income it provides for the public treasury (CSO, 1912: 419).[78] For Rauschenbusch, not only does the land and its resources belong to the community, but it derives its very value from the community. The resocialization of the land is the fundamental step toward the conservation of life and a program of justice for all ("Justice and Brotherhood, 1918: 173).

Thirdly, Rauschenbusch calls for an end to artificial monopolies and for the control and management of natural resources and public utilities by the community. For Rauschenbusch, the increase of public functions is an important corollary of socialized property (CSO, 1912: 430). He argues: "Modern business is a social process, and the community is a partner in every phase of it; most of all where public rights and resources are needed to carry on the business, as in

public utilities and in mining (CSO, 1912: 451).[79] Rauschenbusch prefers community ownership to control and ownership by a centralized Federal government.

Finally, Rauschenbusch calls for an interpretation of Christianity that takes into account the social solidaristic nature of human existence. For Rauschenbusch: "The churches have laid stress on the conquest of animal passions; the working class appreciates social solidarity above all things" (CSO, 1912: 455-456). Rauschenbusch's own *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917) represents his most systematic effort to provide a social interpretation of Christianity as a foundation for the work of the church in the Christianization of the social order. The church cannot be indifferent to the socio-structural changes required for the regeneration of society and the creation of the material basis for a Christian social order. In *Righteousness of the Kingdom* (1891) Rauschenbusch concludes:

> The idea that the followers of Christ can be indifferent to the conditions of society about them finds some show of defense in the letter of the Scriptures, but it is condemned by the spirit of Christ. Such indifference is sin. . . . It denies Christ's conception of religion, who taught that there is no way of treating God right except by treating our fellow men right, and that the only plane upon which Christianity can be exercised is the plane of social life (168).

Rauschenbusch believed his program of cooperative ownership and socialization of property not to be new, but to be as old as civilization itself and a contribution of the most advanced religious and Christian social orders of the past. According to Rauschenbusch, Israel, the early church, and the reforming sects and monasteries of medieval Europe were all structured as cooperative commonwealths. He summarizes the tradition when he says:

> All communities that have distinguished and made permanent contributions to the social traditions of mankind have preserved and developed these essential elements of social righteousness in some combination.
>
> . . .
>
> The tyranny and covetousness of the strong in the past have held or broken down the free development of fraternal democracy, so that only broken gleams of the reign of God flash down to us from history (CSO, 1912: 383).[80]

Like the communities of scripture and the later communities faithful to the social teachings of Christ, the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth based on the solidarity of human life, in the present, initiates the Christianization of the social order and the establishment of the material basis for the fullest expression of social justice and love, the kingdom of God.

Rauschenbusch's ethic certainly recognized the possibility of sin in the individual human heart, but its concern was the reality of sin in the social structures of his day. The sin of the social structures, particularly that of the economic structures, had to be understood and confronted if the sin of the individual heart was to be addressed and the good news of the Gospel was to be heard at all. Although Rauschenbusch never lost sight of the reality of individual sin and salvation, his solidaristic perspective, with its insight into the determinative role of the social order for individual human life, never allowed him to separate individual sin from the social structures in which men and women lived or individual salvation from the salvation of the social order as a whole.

Conclusion: The Christian Imperative to Social Action

Rauschenbusch's social ethic, both a structural critique of the social order and a program for its reformation, is carried out in terms of a biblically informed anthropology of solidarity.[81] Rauschenbusch mediates Christianity's message as a socio-ethical message to the audience of his day through a contemporary anthropology of solidarity. Guided by a social understanding of the interdependent nature of human existence and, corollarly, the determinative role of the social order for human life and salvation, Rauschenbusch translates Christianity's message into an ethic for the social order as a whole.

If the Christian message is mediated as a social message for the economic order, the Christian imperative to love can be seen to be mediated as the imperative to a social love, which finds expression in the commitment to work for the transformation of structures of injustice and oppression into structures of cooperation and collectivity. In light of Rauschenbusch's social understanding of the nature of human existence and the situation of human need in his day, Rauschenbusch refuses to allow the Christian imperative to be understood as anything less than a commitment to social love expressed as social action for the

regeneration of the structures of society. Rauschenbusch expresses his social understanding of the Christian imperative to love when he says:

> It is indeed love that we want, but it is socialized love. . . . What we most need today is not the love that will break its back drawing water for a growing factory town from a well that was meant to supply a village, but a love so large and intelligent that it will persuade an ignorant people to build a system of waterworks. . . We want a new avatar of love (CSO, 1912: 44).

Rauschenbusch's understanding of the nature of social regeneration as structural change, enabled by his anthropology of solidarity, remains profoundly relevant for our day. His mediation of the Christian imperative as social action focused on structures of injustice and oppression is equally relevant. In light of the social conditions of poverty and oppression that plague our society and the social orders of the world today, Rauschenbusch's refusal to interpret the Christian imperative to love as anything less than social action for justice focused on structural regeneration seems to be not only modern but crucial for Christians and non-Christians alike, engaged in creating the possibility for an equitable and humane existence for all.

V.

SOLIDARITY AND THEOLOGY: RAUSCHENBUSCH'S THEOLOGY FOR THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

The social crisis of Rauschenbusch's day was, in the final analysis, perceived by Rauschenbusch as a religious crisis. For Rauschenbusch: "the further we get beyond theories and really try to transform the social life, the more do we realize that the social problem is in the last resort a religious problem" ("Religion: The Life of God in the Soul of Man," 1909:123). The social crisis was the result of systematized sin and injustice institutionalized in the structures of society. The goal of social regeneration was to change the structures in order that a fully Christian life could be lived ("The Freedom of Spiritual Religion, "1910:4). If the churches were to play a role in the reshaping and Christianization of the social order, as social forces themselves, a new theology, as well as a new ethic, was required.

Rauschenbusch's *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917), his last great work, can be seen to offer a social restatement of the Christian doctrines in the interest of providing a theological foundation for the work of social regeneration. Here, as is the case consistently throughout his work, an anthropology of solidarity guides a new interpretation of the Christian message for the social order of his day.

The following chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines Rauschenbusch's method in the context of his understanding of the role of theology in the life of humanity as a whole. If Rauschenbusch's method can be seen as mediational, his theology can be seen to be situated at the juncture of humanity's secular and religious experience.

The second section examines Rauschenbusch's method in terms of his social interpretation of the Christian doctrines. It explores how his anthropology of

solidarity functions as a hermeneutic to offer a revised interpretation of the Christian doctrines for his day. It considers the nature of the doctrines when their anthropological referent is changed from the traditional privatized understanding of human existence to a social, solidaristic one.

The chapter concludes with an examination of the implications of Rauschenbusch's social theory for the relation of theology to the social order as a whole. It examines the implications of that relationship for the place of theology in the public arena today.

Rauschenbusch's Method and the Role of Theology

Rauschenbusch understood the role of theology to be one of mediation. It was required to interpret the religious life of humanity. Humanity's religious life set the agenda and guided the work of theology. As the religious life and experiences of humanity evolved, theology too was called to change.[82] Speaking of the relation of theology to the religious life of humanity, Rauschenbusch says:

> Religious experience is the material; theology tries to understand that material and give [a] systematic and scientific interpretation of it. That is the ideal relation between the two. Consequently, as the facts of religion widen out, as the variety of religious experience grows better understood, theology can also advance. Theology ought to progress as our understanding of religion progresses ("The Relation of Theology to Religion," 1904:89).

The religious life of humankind however was always informed by the general human experience of the age. If theology's work was guided by the religious life of humankind, the religious life of humankind, in turn, was thoroughly informed by the common human experience of life all around. Thus, for Rauschenbusch,

> When all other departments of thought are silently changing it is impossible for religion to remain unaffected. . . . If it lags behind and presents outgrown concepts of life and duty, it is no longer in the full sense the gospel ("A Public Ministry," 1904:137).

The new experience which was influencing and informing the religious life of men and women in Rauschenbusch's day was that of a growing consciousness of the social nature of human existence. Rauschenbusch describes the revolution in human consciousness when he says:

> We are today passing through an historical transition as thorough and important as any in history. . . . We are emerging from the era of individualism. The principles of coordination, cooperation and solidarity [are]. . . being applied in ever-widening areas and [are] . . . gaining remarkable hold on the spirits of men ("A Public Ministry," 1904:137).

Rauschenbusch believed that the new social consciousness was creating a new religious and ethical experience "akin to that of the prophets" (TSG, 1917:21), and if it was allowed to set the agenda for theological reflection, as a principle of interpretation, it promised to generate a new interpretation of the Christian doctrines. Because theology was always called to change with evolving human experience, in order that the Christian message be mediated, Rauschenbusch argued that if theology remained dominated by the old individualistic perspective, refusing transformation and growth in light of the new social consciousness, it would eventually have nothing to say; it would die. Rauschenbusch concluded that theology required the new social perspective as the new social perspective required a theological foundation:

> The social gospel needs a theology to make it effective; but theology needs the social gospel to vitalize it (TSG, 1917:1).

A theological foundation for the work of the social gospel could be established when the new social consciousness was brought to bear on the traditional interpretation of the Christian doctrines. When a social understanding of human existence informed the interpretation of the doctrines, a new theology capable of undergirding the work of social redemption was made possible. For Rauschenbusch, the old theology was inadequate to the work of social redemption. It was inadequate precisely in its individualistic perspective. It's inadequate anthropology issued in "a halfway system of theology in which there . . . [was] no room for social redemption" (TSG, 1917:8).

Although Rauschenbusch never articulated a method for his interpretation of the Christian doctrines, his interpretation shows that he changed the anthropological understanding of the traditional interpretation of the doctrines

from a privatized understanding of human existence to a social, solidaristic one. Rauschenbusch's commitment to a social reinterpretation of the Christian doctrines can be seen to have been actualized by a hermeneutic of solidarity. Roger Haight defines the nature of Rauschenbusch's method when he says:

> . . . the simple change of reference, from the individual in an individualistic conception of human existence to a view of the social nature and structure of human existence, is responsible for a new and different understanding of all the doctrines (1988:484).

In the interests of providing a theological foundation for the work of the social regeneration, Rauschenbusch offers a socially regenerated theology. He mediates a contemporary understanding of Christianity's truth claims by means of an anthropology of solidarity that continues to be the classical statement of Social Christianity to this day.

A Social Restatement of the Christian Doctrines

Rauschenbusch's social restatement of the major Christian doctrines is made in the context of the kingdom ideal. Rauschenbusch speaks of the search for a religious ideal adequate to the new social experience when he says:

> . . . we are today inquiring for a religious ideal large enough to include social as well as individual salvation, and for ways and means of making the latent forces of religion operative in public life ("Religion: The Life of God in the Soul of Man," 1909:123).

The kingdom, in Rauschenbusch's theology, is interpreted as the doctrine of social redemption, the religious expression of the emergent social consciousness of his day. So central to Rauschenbusch's work is the ideal of the kingdom that Rauschenbusch calls for all Christian doctrines to be revised in order to articulate more closely with it (TSG, 1917:131). Rauschenbusch explains that,

> The doctrine is itself the social gospel. Without it, the idea of redeeming the social order will be but an annex to the orthodox conception of the scheme of salvation (TSG, 1917:131).

The kingdom ideal becomes the norm by which all other doctrines are to be revised and the center of Rauschenbusch's theological statement precisely because, in Rauschenbusch's interpretation, the kingdom means the regeneration of the social orders of history for the salvation of the race in its collective life. The kingdom becomes the theological foundation and the religious motivation for the work of social regeneration, the work of the social gospel.

The Doctrine of Sin and the Kingdom of Evil

The social nature of human existence determines Rauschenbusch's understanding of the nature of sin to be selfishness. Rauschenbusch defines sin in terms of the new social consciousness as selfishness (TSG, 1917:47).

Selfishness disrupts the progress of the kingdom, the evolution of God's will in history for the unity and salvation of all. Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the nature of sin is thoroughly socialized: we do not sin against God without sinning against the kingdom, which directly involves our brothers and sisters; and we do not sin against our brothers and sisters without sinning against God and God's kingdom. In the context of the kingdom, the nature of sin is socialized and selfishness becomes both the transcendent and immanent dimensions of sin. Rauschenbusch says:

> Sin is not a private transaction between the sinner and God. Humanity always crowds the audience-room when God holds court. . . . We rebel against God and repudiate his will when we set our profit and ambition above the welfare of our fellows and above the Kingdom. . . which binds them together. . . . God works through humanity to realize his purposes. . . [and] the sins against the least of our fellow men. . . concern God. . . . when we retard the progress of mankind, we retard the revelation of the glory of God (TSG, 1917:48).

Rauschenbusch's social restatement of the doctrine of sin excludes the story of the Fall. The story of the Fall is rejected on the basis of its socio-ethical implications, i.e., that every person is equally culpable for the sin of Adam (Smith, 1955:205). Here attention is directed away from the present and active

sources of evil and the nerve between the reality of present sin and the requirement for social action is cut (TSG, 1917:43).

The Christian notion of original sin, however, is retrieved for Rauschenbusch's social interpretation. It is retrieved on the basis of its solidaristic understanding of human life (TSG, 1917:57-58). Rauschenbusch however broadens the concept of the transmission of sin to include the social channels as well as the biological hereditary channels of transmission. This interpretation argues for control over the transmission of sin insofar as social channels are "more susceptible of religious influence. . ." (TSG, 1917:59-60).

Rauschenbusch's anthropology of solidarity makes possible his profound understanding of the social nature of sin expressed in his concept of the kingdom of evil, the focus and culmination of his discussion. The kingdom of evil is the final working out of sin in the human situation of solidarity. It can be described as the accumulation and compounding of all sin down through the generations into a vast and powerful network of evil which is inherited from the past and conditions present and future generations, having a determinative influence on the life of every individual.

Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the kingdom of evil is a contemporary restatement of the traditional doctrine of Satan and his kingdom. Coupled with the concept of original sin, the idea of the kingdom of Satan, expresses the radically social nature of human sin. As understood by Rauschenbusch, every human sin grows out of and contributes to the power of sin already present in the world. Rauschenbusch retrieves the idea of original sin and the kingdom of Satan because, together, the two doctrines offer an adequate understanding of the radically social and solidaristic nature of all human sin:

> These two doctrines combined, -- the hereditary, physical unity of sin, and the supernatural power of evil behind all sinful human action, -- create a solidaristic consciousness of sin and evil, which I think is necessary for the religious mind. Take away these two doctrines, and our sense of the need of redemption will become much more superficial and will be mainly concerned with the transient acts and vices of individuals (TSG, 1917:90).

In the human situation of solidarity, all bear responsibility for the perpetuation of the kingdom of evil insofar as each acts according to the sinful principles which constitute that kingdom. However, the super-personal forces of society, institutions reaching into all aspects of human life, are understood by

Rauschenbusch to contribute to the growth of the kingdom of evil in a way which is impossible for the individual.

Rauschenbusch characterizes the super-personal forces as highly organized complexes exerting authority and imposing their moral standards on members and society as a whole (TSG, 1917:70-71). Rauschenbusch points out that although organizations are rarely formed for explicitly evil ends, all have the potential for evil and oftentimes backslide under weak leadership, pressure, or temptation for profit. The super-personal forces, in their power and autonomy, are capable of creating an environment of evil, structuring the social order along sinful lines, exerting control over all members of society and contributing to the kingdom of evil in a way not possible for individuals.

Rauschenbusch's insight into the determinative role of the super-personal forces for the lives and salvation of all is enabled by his social understanding of human existence. For Rauschenbusch, the reality of these powerful spiritual entities must be brought into Christian theology, if theology is to offer an adequate understanding of the social nature of sin and the needed foundation for the work of social regeneration is to be provided (TSG, 1917:75-76).

In the final analysis, sin, in Rauschenbusch's social restatement, must be understood as social because human existence is social. Although sin is an act of the individual, individual existence is social to its core, depending on and contributing to the structures of human existence all around. Human sin grows out of and contributes to the structures and environment of sin already present in the world, understood by Rauschenbusch as the kingdom of evil.

The Doctrine of Salvation and the Kingdom of God

An anthropology of solidarity guides Rauschenbusch's social interpretation of the doctrine of salvation. The doctrine of salvation means the salvation of the race in its collective life. If the solidarity of human life and action shows individual sin to be inseparable from the sin all around, the possibility of conversion and salvation for each individual, likewise, is mediated by the environment into which each individual is socialized. A Christian interpretation of human salvation, from the perspective of an anthropology of solidarity, must include the redemption of the social order.

Rauschenbusch argues that although organized Christianity has exerted influence on communities throughout history, it "has not taken in hand the salvation of the social life with conscious determination. . . develop[ing]... methods to dislodge evil from its social fortification, where it is entrenched in customs, laws, vested interests and powerful organizations ("Enoch Pond Lectures," 1915:1). For Rauschenbusch, the work of the social gospel brings the needed social perspective to bear on the doctrine of salvation:

> The new thing in the social gospel is the clearness. . . with which it sets forth the necessity and possibility of redeeming the historical life of humanity from the social wrongs which now pervade it and which act as temptations and incitement to evil and as forces of resistance to the powers of redemption which lie beyond the individual soul. If our exposition of the superpersonal agents of sin and. . . the Kingdom of Evil is true, . . . a salvation confined to the soul. . . is . . . an imperfect and only partly effective salvation (TSG, 1917:95).

The social perspective offered by the social gospel is that of the kingdom. The kingdom of God means the salvation of the race in its collective life and its social orders. It is "the great doctrine of social redemption" (Enoch Pond Lectures, 1915:9).

Rauschenbusch's social anthropology requires that the kingdom be understood as a radically social event. His social anthropology determines the kingdom as historical reality as well. If the kingdom means the salvation of the race in its collective life, the salvation of the social orders of history requires a historical dimension for the kingdom.

The kingdom becomes the center of Rauschenbusch's social restatement of the doctrines. It is the doctrine of social redemption and the religious transfiguration of human solidarity both in and beyond history.

The doctrine of salvation is thoroughly socialized. Human salvation is necessarily social because human existence is social. In the condition of solidarity, individual life cannot be saved apart from all other human life; the salvation of the race is required. The implications of human solidarity require the redemption of the social orders of history. Rauschenbusch's social anthropology determines the nature of human salvation to be radically social and guides its mediation to a contemporary social order, as a foundation for the work of social redemption.

The God-Concept, the Historical Jesus and the Atonement

The concept of God, in Rauschenbusch's interpretation, is properly mediated only through the historical revelation of Jesus Christ. The historical Jesus becomes normative for any understanding of the nature of God. Rauschenbusch's interpretation of Jesus and the message of the kingdom determines his interpretation of the God-concept. Although the God-concept is itself, according to Rauschenbusch, a social product, Jesus remains the norm against which the understanding of God, formulated in each age, must be measured. The interpretation of those ages in which a social understanding of the nature of God is predominant comes closest to the meaning offered by the revelation in Jesus Christ. Theology must seek to revise its interpretation of the concept of God in light of a social consciousness, for it is an interpretation guided by social consciousness which comes closest to the revelation in Jesus Christ. Rauschenbusch does not separate his interpretation of the nature of God from his interpretation of the life and message of Jesus. It is to Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the New Testament Jesus that we must first turn.

According to Rauschenbusch, the power of Jesus lay not in the mystical doctrine of the two natures, but in the person of Jesus himself (RK, 1891:226). From the perspective of solidarity, Jesus' entrance into and participation in the solidarity of humankind assures that the revolution he set in motion continues down to the present. The revolution set in motion by Jesus, the first step in the salvation of humankind, was the initiation of the kingdom. It was achieved, according to Rauschenbusch, by the personality of Jesus, consciously overcoming temptation and living out his God-consciousness. The personality of Jesus enabled him to become the initiator of the salvation of the race, the kingdom of God (TSG, 1917:151).

Jesus not only initiated the beginnings of human salvation by bringing in the kingdom, but his oneness with God in God's will for the kingdom renders him the "real revelation of God" (TSG, 1917:152). The images of God as despot, monarch or feudal lord, products of the social experiences and theologies of the past, according to Rauschenbusch, have fallen short of the revelation of God in Jesus and the message of the kingdom. Required is a socialization of the God-concept from the perspective of a social understanding of human existence which

would, once again, bring the human conception of God into alignment with Jesus' revelation of God.

In Jesus, we have a socializing of the God-concept. For Rauschenbusch, one of the greatest redemptive services rendered humankind by Jesus is the appellation of God as "Father" (TSG, 1917:74). In calling God our Father, Jesus revealed God to be in a social, solidaristic relation to all of humanity, willing its unity and salvation in the kingdom. According to Rauschenbusch,

> [Jesus] disconnected the idea [of God] from the coercive and predatory State, and transferred it to the realm of family life, the chief embodiment of solidarity and love. He not only saved humanity; he saved God (TSG, 1917:175).

In Jesus, God becomes the ground of human solidarity and the bond of racial unity. So convinced is Rauschenbusch of the solidarity of God with humankind and the forces for its salvation that he argues that the very idea of the existence of God would be open to attack were the social movement to fail. Rauschenbusch says:

> It is not enough for theology to eliminate this or that autocratic trait. Its God must join the social movement. The real God has been in it long ago. The development of a Christian social order would be the highest proof of God's saving power. The failure of the social movement would impugn his existence (TSG, 1917:178).

Theology is called to redefine the God-concept incorporating the experience of the social gospel in order to bring to the Christian consciousness and the work of the social gospel a God who is not only personal but social: the foundation of our human solidarity (TSG, 1917:186), and at one with the forces for social justice at work in the world. Because God is the ground of our human existence and the source of its solidarity, we are given a basis for present hope and a support in our labor for the unity and salvation of all. Rauschenbusch concludes:

> God is the common basis of all our life. Our human personalities may seem distinct, but their roots run down into the eternal life of God. . . . The all pervading life of God is the ground of the spiritual oneness of the race and of our hope for its closer fellowship in the future.

> The consciousness of solidarity, therefore, is of the essence of religion (TSG, 1917:186).[83]

Like the concept of God, the doctrine of the atonement is properly understood, for Rauschenbusch, only when mediated through the revelation of the historical Jesus. Interpretations of the atonement like those of the nature of God, are social products of the communities in which they are formulated. Interpretations of the atonement centering on sacrifice, ransom or satisfaction are accretions of past ages and social customs and issue in an unsatisfactory interpretation of Jesus' death for a contemporary consciousness. The contemporary perspective of solidarity and the social interpretations of the nature of sin and salvation alone offer the possibility of an interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement that is both modern and consonant with that of the New Testament itself. Rauschenbusch argues:

> Insofar as the historical and social sciences have taught our generation to comprehend solidaristic facts, we are in a better situation to understand the atonement than any previous generation (TSG, 1917:244).

According to Rauschenbusch, Jesus bore our sins insofar as the kingdom of evil and our solidarity with that kingdom was the direct cause of his death. Jesus was bound up "backward and forward and sideward with the life of humanity" (TSG, 1917:245). In light of the fact that Jesus lived in solidarity with humankind, and evil so pervades the life of humanity that no one shares the common life without coming under the effects of collective sin, either as participant or victim, Jesus' death was a direct result of the kingdom of evil. Jesus died as the victim of a collective evil constituted by religious bigotry, graft, political power, injustice, mob spirit, militarism and class contempt (TSG, 1917:248-258). For Rauschenbusch:

> It requires no legal fiction of imputation to explain that 'he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.' Solidarity explains it (TSG, 1917:248).

Jesus did not contribute to the kingdom of evil, yet he bore its full effect. As we today assent to or passively comply with the sins of the kingdom of evil, we contribute to the reality which caused the death of Jesus and perpetuate its existence. According to Rauschenbusch, Matthew 23, Jesus' invective against the

religious leaders and the warning to his own people, evidences that this was the understanding of Jesus himself. Rauschenbusch concludes:

> This is Christ's own theology. It is not a legal theory of imputation, but a conception of spiritual solidarity, by which our own free and personal acts constitute us partakers of the guilt of. . . [all]. . . . [T]he realistic forces which killed Jesus were not accidental and personal causes but. . . the reaction of the totality of racial sin against him; . . . [and] the guilt of those who did it spreads to all who reaffirm the acts which killed him. The key to the problem is contained in the realization of solidarity (TSG, 1917:259).

If the principle of human solidarity guides Rauschenbusch's interpretation of Jesus' death as historical event, it also guides his interpretation of Jesus' death as atonement. Insofar as Jesus existed in solidarity with humankind and yet was one with the divine Logos, his death, taken in connection with his life, was at once the supreme act of opposition to sin and the kingdom of evil and the supreme act of obedience to God in loyalty to the kingdom (TSG, 1917:266). The cross established the principle of "forgiving love" in the heart of God for humanity as a whole (TSG, 1917:264). Rauschenbusch offers an interpretation which "begins with the solidarity between God and Christ and proceeds to the solidarity between God and mankind" (TSG, 1917:267).

The principle of solidarity in the interpretation of the life and message of the historical Jesus mediates a contemporary social understanding of the doctrine of the nature of God in relation to humankind and the doctrine of the atonement as saving event. The solidarity of Jesus with humankind shows the relation of God with humanity to be one of solidarity. The solidarity of Jesus with God shows Jesus' death, taken in connection with his initiation of the kingdom, to be salvific event.

The Holy Spirit and Inspiration

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is restated in the social terms of the Spirit's relation to humanity as a whole. According to Rauschenbusch, the New Testament witness to the experience of Pentecost reveals that the Spirit belongs not to individuals, but to the Christian community as a whole (TSG, 1917:189).

The entire New Testament community received the Spirit, and, the witness to the power of the Spirit was the community as a whole (TSG, 1917:189).

The implications of a social understanding of the doctrine of the Spirit for the notion of inspiration, vis-a-vis revelation, are drawn out by Rauschenbusch in a social reformulation of the traditional understanding of inspiration. Traditionally understood as the direct influence of the Spirit on the writers of scripture irrespective of their environment and the communities in which they wrote, the doctrine of inspiration from the perspective of solidarity requires that the influence of the community be included in any interpretation of revelation (TSG, 1917:189-190). The social nature of human existence, for Rauschenbusch, requires that the community itself hold a place in the Spirit's informing process (TSG, 1917:190). Rauschenbusch points to the work of the historical-critical method of his day and the *religiongeschichtliche Methode* as "a completed laboratory experiment proving the value and efficiency of a social understanding of the nature and work of the Spirit" (TSG, 1917:191).

The Church

Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the church focuses on the role of the church in human salvation (TSG, 1917:118).[84] The purpose of the church is the purpose of its founder, Jesus Christ: "the establishment and extension of the Kingdom of God, the regeneration of human society" (RK, 1891:152). Its role can be seen to be determined by the requirements of the kingdom of God, i.e., the requirements of the regeneration of the social order for the salvation of all.

The extension of the kingdom in history requires that the church be a social, organized force in history. According to Rauschenbusch, not only individuals, but a community was essential to Christ's work (RK, 1891:151). If evil is organized, the forces for the extension of the kingdom in history must also be organized. For Rauschenbusch,

> It is not enough to have God, Christ and the Bible. A group is needed, organized on Christian principles. . . expressing the Christian spirit. . . (SPJ, 1916:163).
> . . .

> What chance would a disembodied spirit of Christianity have, whispering occasionally at the key-hole of the human heart? (TSG, 1917:120).

The church necessarily becomes the social factor of redemption in the face of organized evil and the social nature of sin in the world (TSG, 1917:119).

As a social force for the extension of the kingdom, the church participates in the strategy for social redemption. The strategy itself is shaped by the social nature of human sin and salvation. Rather than seeking the conversion and regeneration of individuals apart from their social situation, the church strives for the regeneration of the social order so that the conversion and redemption of human lives becomes possible and the kingdom extended in history. The church brings its organizational strength and corporate power to bear on the injustices of the social order and supports those forces for justice and love congruent with the extension of the kingdom in history. According to Rauschenbusch,

> It offers. . . not only many human bodies and minds to serve as ministers of [Christ's]. . . salvation, but its own composite personality, . . . a collective memory. . .trained in moral feelings. . . with a collective will set on righteousness (TSG, 1917:119).

Like a great super-personal force against evil, "assimilating individuals and making them over into citizens of the kingdom" (SPJ, 1916:163), nurturing new life in its midst (RK, 1891:152), the church is an expression of the "additional force. . . given to religion by its embodiment in a group of believers" (SPJ, 1916:163). In the face of the powerful super-personal forces of evil, the church follows the strategy of social redemption if it is to be an effective force for the salvation of all.

Although the church is interpreted by Rauschenbusch primarily as a social force in society, actively working for the regeneration of the social order for the salvation of all, it is also understood to be a community of salvation for its members. If if seeks to extend the kingdom in the world, it also looks to the kingdom in its midst; if it is determined by the requirement for the extension of the kingdom in history, it also mediates salvation to its membership by the kingdom within it (TSG, 1917:126, 127).

Rauschenbusch's understanding of the church as salvific agent in the world is determined by his understanding of the social nature of salvation itself. For Rauschenbusch, the focus of the church is outward rather than inward; it is a

force for social regeneration and the salvation of the race as a whole.[85] As a salvific community it bears the kingdom in its midst, but as the social factor in redemption it strives for the regeneration of the social order, the extension of the kingdom in history.

Conclusion: Theology and the Social Order

In Rauschenbusch's restatement of the Christian doctrines, a social understanding of human existence as one of solidarity guides his interpretation and mediates a contemporary social understanding of the Christian doctrines to Rauschenbusch's day. Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the social nature of human sin and salvation, the relation of God to humankind in the kingdom initiated by Jesus, and the social role of the church in the salvation of humankind provide a theological foundation for the work of social regeneration. Rauschenbusch's insights into the nature of social regeneration and the social nature of sin in the kingdom of evil bear relevance for social action today and have led Sydney Ahlstrom to conclude: "Because of his most atypical insistence on the power of the 'kingdom of evil', he is one of the few liberal theologians who could still be read after wars and depressions had dimmed men's vision of a perfected social order" (1972:801). Rauschenbusch's social restatement of the Christian doctrines in *A Theology for the Social Gospel* remains the classic theological statement of Social Christianity to the present.

If Rauschenbusch's hermeneutic of solidarity can be seen to mediate a radically social understanding of Christianity's central truths, his social understanding of the nature of human sin and salvation can also be seen to move the practice of theology itself out into the social and public arena. The requirements of social salvation, particularly that the Christian message address the social order in the language of its day, requires that theology situate itself in the social arena as well as in the church and engage in the dialogue of public discourse. As the church is required to bring its organizational strength to bear on the social problems of the day, supporting those forces for social justice in line with the extension of the kingdom in history, theology too can be seen to be required to give voice and support to those forces, both within and outside of the church, working for the establishment of justice and the extension of the kingdom

in history. Insofar as Rauschenbusch's own theology gave voice to the work of social regeneration, specifically the work of the social gospel, his own theology can be seen to have been situated in the social and public arena of his day.

The relation of theology to the social order, a relationship of mediation in the work of Rauschenbusch, is fundamentally modern. Today, theology is not longer an internal dialogue within and among organized Christian communities, but is a partner in the dialogue with all aspects of public life. Theology is required to bring its unique perspective to bear on the social issues of the day and it is, in turn, informed by the social issues it seeks to address, in order that the Christian message be more faithfully mediated to the present of every age.

CONCLUSION: A REVISIONIST READING

The reading of the work of Walter Rauschenbusch presented here has attempted to show that his work is structured by a method which is interpretative or hermeneutical in intent, directed by an anthropology of solidarity. Rauschenbusch's work mediates the Christian message to his day in the language and terms of a social, solidaristic understanding of human existence. Rauschenbusch changes the anthropological base of the traditional interpretation of the Christian message from an individualistic understanding of human existence to a social, solidaristic one. His anthropology guides his interpretation, mediating a new social understanding of the message of salvation to his day. Rauschenbusch's work offers a contemporary social understanding of the Christian message in the attempt to provide a basis for the work of social regeneration, specifically the work of the social gospel.

Rauschenbusch's early ministry in one of New York's most economically depressed areas is considered crucial to his work in this reading. His encounter with conditions of poverty and oppression among the working poor, to whom he ministered, is interpreted as catalytic for his understanding of human existence, expressed in the category of solidarity, the understanding which determined the perspective of all his subsequent work.

Although Rauschenbusch never articulated a method for his work, when it is read in light of recent hermeneutical theology, specifically the hermeneutical theologies of Rudolf Bultmann and Dorothee Soelle, it evidences a hermeneutical dynamic. Bultmann's work heuristically illumines Rauschenbusch's work as a hermeneutical, interpretative project, mediating the Christian texts to his day in terms of a contemporary understanding of human existence. Soelle's work, likewise, heuristically illumines Rauschenbusch's work but shows the

interpretative principle of Rauschenbusch's work to be, like her own, a social rather than individualistic understanding of human existence.

When Rauschenbusch's work is reconstructed so that its method and its guiding principle of solidarity are brought to the front, methodologically and anthropologically, Rauschenbusch's work can be seen to be fundamentally modern.

Methodologically Rauschenbusch's work implicitly fulfills the modern requirement that the biblical texts of the past be interpreted for the present in contemporary terms if they are to be heard in the present. Anthropologically, Rauschenbusch's radically social understanding of human existence as one of solidarity is both current and crucial for an anthropologically adequate interpretation of the Christian texts for human existence today. Although substantively aspects of Rauschenbusch's work are dated, his mediational method guided by a social understanding of human existence issues in a socially demythologized understanding of the kingdom, a social ethic which interprets the Christian imperative in the radically social terms of a commitment to social action focused on the structures of the social order, and a socially revised interpretation of the Christian doctrines which not only bear relevance for today but require that theology itself be situated in the public and political arena of the social order. Methodologically and anthropologically, Rauschenbusch's work can be seen to be fundamentally modern, offering a perspective that is relevant and crucial to theological reflection and social dialogue on the conditions of injustice, poverty, and oppression that plague the social orders of our world today.

Historically and critically, the importance of Rauschenbusch's contribution to the past is recognized. Lloyd Averill summarizes Rauschenbusch's contribution to his own time when he says:

> Never before had the structures of the common life been subjected to such systematic and searching Christian examination, and never before had the attempt been made to fashion the imperative of Christian love into concrete social and political programs in enthusiastic alliance with the growing forces of secular reform (1967:139).

The purpose of the revised reading offered here has been to show that Rauschenbusch's work can be seen to hold more than historical significance for us today. His method and social perspective emerge as distinctly modern. His

method of mediation offers an approach to the Christian message which retrieves its radically social gospel for our world today. His interpretative principle of solidarity offers a perspective on the nature of human existence and human society that is relevant and crucial if the issues of social justice are to be addressed and the conditions of poverty, homelessness and human brokenness in our world today are not to be counted as the personal problems of others but rightly treated as social conditions in which, as contributors and victims, we all share.

ENDNOTES

Endnotes for Introduction and Chapter I

1/ Walter Rauschenbusch was considered by Reinhold Niebuhr to be the best spokesperson for the American Social Gospel. Cf. Introduction to Reinhold Niebuhr's *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935). Cf. also C.H. Hopkins, 1940: 216; Handy, 1965: 209; and Ahlstrom, 1972: 785.

2/ Ernest Clipsham has said: "The years between the Civil War and the close of the century were years of tremendous social and technological change and especially of rapid urbanization. . . . Changes, technological, social, industrial and intellectual, constituted the background to Rauschenbusch's life and work, and had a direct bearing on his career (1981: 113-114).

3/ Early in his ministry Rauschenbusch read widely in the literature of social analysis. A number of sources cite material he read. Cf. V.P. Bodein's *The Social Gospel of Walter Rauschenbusch and Its Relation to Education* (New York: Yale University Press, 1976), 5-6; K.J. Jaehn's *Rauschenbusch: The Formative Years* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976), 36-37; G.B. Oxnam's *Personalities in Social Reform* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950), 60; and D.R. Sharpe's *Walter Rauschenbusch* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), 65, 197. The most complete list of material read by Rauschenbusch, during this period, is offered by D. Sharpe. He says:

> After 1886. . . he began to study social issues. He read. . . Richard T. Ely. . .E.J. Shrinen. . . Richard Heath. . . F.H. Giddings, J.A. Fitch, E.A. Ross, R.H. Edwards, John Graham Brooks, Graham Taylor, Tom L. Johnson, Emile de Laveleye . . . Jacob Riis, Bellamy, Henry George, Tolstoy, Mazzini, John Spargo, Werner Sombart, George M. Reynolds, W.M. Reedy, Theodore Roosevelt, John A. Ryan, Paul Sabatier, Marc Sangnier, Schiller, Vida D. Scudder, Lord Shaftsbury, Simons, Thomas à Kempis. . . W.J. Tucker, William Allen White, Jane Addams, Henry Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks, John Bunyan, W.J. Bryan, Edmund Burke, John Calvin, G.K. Chesterton, F. Engels, David Lloyd George, W.E. Gladstone, G.W. Golre, Elie Gounelle. . . Charles Evans Hughes, Juàres, Thomas Jefferson, J.W. Jenks, "Golden Rule" Jones, LaFollette. . . Julian Lenitt, Abraham Lincoln, F. Lamennais, Count Mirabeau, Robert Owen, Francis G. Peabody, Wendell Phillips, Leonard Ragaz. . . . he [Rauschenbusch] familiarized himself with the thought of his day (1942: 65).

4/ Interestingly, John D. Rockefeller, Sr. was a major benefactor who made the building of the new church possible. Martin Marty says:

> . . . on occasion that magnate sloshed through the muds of the West Side as a confidant and benefactor of the socially progressive minister. And. . . the congregation loved their pastor because he not only came to save souls. . . but also cared about the other needs of their lives (1984: 350).

Paul Minus in his biography of Rauschenbusch, reports that the Rockefellers gave the Rauschenbuschs (Walter and Pauline) monetary gifts and contributions for personal needs and support. Between 1900 and 1918 the Rauschenbuschs received approximately $8,000. "'We rejoice in all that you are doing for the Master,' wrote the Baptist capitalist to the Baptist reformer in 1904" (1989: 134). Minus says:

> Rauschenbusch never joined the chorus of reformers who criticized Rockefeller's business practices, but this was typical of him, for he believed strongly that blame for America's economic woes lay more with the capitalist system than with the individuals who profited from it (1989: 134).

Rockefeller's daughter, Bessie, had married Charles Augustus Strong, son of the president of Rochester Theological Seminary and close friend of Rauschenbusch's father (Griffin, 1967: 55). Rockefeller not only contributed to the seminary at Rochester but also endowed the Baptist Seminary at the University of Chicago (Schlesinger, 1978: 307).

5/ Minus says that Rauschenbusch undertook a lip reading course as early as 1891 in Hamburg (1989: 76). Jaehn says: "To compensate for his deafness he undertook an intensive course in lip reading in the fall [of 1892 after arriving in New York]" (1976: 44).

6/ At this time Rauschenbusch was offered the editorial post of the Baptist German Publication House in Cleveland, but declined; instead he became editor of *Der Jugend Herold*, a Baptist magazine published for the young people of the German speaking Baptist churches in the United States.

7/ In a concluding appraisal of the social effects of the Brotherhood, Martin Marty states that the group changed little:

> It must be said that the members of this little brotherhood never came close to solving the economic issue that perplexed them. They had no clue as to how to break the hold of monopoly wealth or disrupt the unjust class system. The capitalists knew that they needed to gain and hold power and the Marxists knew that they needed violent means to prevail. But Rauschenbusch wavered: 'To hit or to endure? --

> Usually one or the other has to be chosen.' He was not capable of hitting for religious reasons; but to endure permitted injustices to continue. The Social Gospel progressives never came up with a clear address to this issue. . . 1984: 351).

Paul Minus is not as critical of Rauschenbusch as Marty. Minus cites Rauschenbusch's own belief that the Brotherhood was too dependent on Leighton Williams who kept the group from taking "bold stands" on the social issues of the day. Minus says:

> In 1912, obviously disappointed, Rauschenbusch confessed he believed the organization had been held back by its excessive dependence upon 'my dear friend, Leighton Williams,' who with other key leaders had dissuaded the Brotherhood from taking bold stands on social issues; consequently 'we have marked time on the vague statements of an earlier day while all the world has swept forward. So we have lost the young men.' It was a sad admission.
> . . .
> Rauschenbusch concluded that the only useful future for the Brotherhood would be to have it join forces with comparable organizations. . . . Brotherhood leaders did not pursue the proposal, and the organization gradually petered out, never recapturing the luster of its first five years (1989: 131).

8/ Henry Emerson Fosdick points out that "This new relationship [with the academic life] meant for him both a platform from which he could reach a wider audience with his social message, and an opportunity to share with new leaders of the Church the insights and convictions which he had won during the laborious years in Hell's Kitchen" (Landis, ed., 1951: xvii).

9/ Although Rauschenbusch spent his entire academic career at Rochester Seminary, he lectured at a number of important and prominent universities. He held lectureships at the Pacific School of Religion, Ohio Wesleyan University, Grinnell College, Yale Divinity School, Oberlin Theological Seminary, and Bangor Theological Seminary (Moehlman, 1928: 33).

10/ James Dombrowski reports that, "In 1886, the year of the Haymarket riot, there were sixteen hundred strikes, involving six hundred thousand men and Carol D. Wright estimates that in the same year one million men were unemployed" (1936: 3-4).

11/ Robert Handy says that from 1860 to 1920 the total population of the nation increased from 31 1/2 million to over 105 million (1976).

12/ C. H. Hopkins corroborating Abell's statistics, says:

> In 1870 only a little over 1/5 of the nation's population lived in cities. By 1890 the proportion had risen to 1/3 (1940: 97).

Cf. also C.E. Olmstead who says: "In 1870 little more than one-fifth of the country's population lived in urban areas; by 1890 the percentage had risen to one-third and by 1900 it had reached the 40 per cent mark (1960: 475).

13/ Rauschenbusch's father had been trained as a missionary to German-speaking immigrants. Rauschenbusch himself was prepared to minister to the German-speaking immigrants of the Baptist Parishes of the United States. It was in the spirit of solidarity and equal rights to the earth's resources that Rauschenbusch issued a statement in 1888 to the Baptist Congress stating a positive attitude toward the policy of open immigration. He said:

> I believe in throwing open this country to all who will come, for I believe God made it for all. Who are we that we should close this country against the rest of the world. . . . our fathers or our grandfathers were all immigrants at one time. Think of a vessel being wrecked; the life saving crew goes out to rescue them and takes in enough into the boat to fill up the benches comfortably while there are plenty of other wretches out in the water eager to be saved; suppose those in the boat should say to those outside, we cannot take you in, it would inconvenience us, and if the poor wretches got their hands on the gunwale, the others should drive them into the waters, would it not be driving the men back into a living death? We are driving men back into their poverty in Europe. Let all the nations come in. Throw open the resources of this country. . . . I think this very pressure of population brought on by immigration is a boon to us. . . . We have been turning our attention to social questions in a way we have never done before ("Limits of Immigration," 1888: 87).

Rauschenbusch understood the social problems of the United States in terms of unregulated competition and private ownership of natural resources and production rather than as a result of an open door policy of immigration.

14/ In his "Introduction" to *A Rauschenbusch Reader* (1957), Harry Emerson Fosdick quotes Rauschenbusch concerning the source of his social awareness. For Rauschenbusch, "It did not come from the Church. It came through personal contact with poverty. . . " (xv).

15/ C. Strout points out that:

> . . . the radical socialist tradition had profoundly secular roots and an anti-religious animus. . . .These limitations were severe enough, but they were supplemented by the difficulty that secular socialists themselves were faced with the competing power of the republican tradition in America, which made its own persuasive and time-honored claim on the ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity, internationalism, technological progress, and materialistic abundance (1974: 227).

16/ H.H. Quint says of Jesse H. Jones, a progressive churchman of the 1870's: "His espousal of government ownership, of the means of production and distribution; his demand for the abolition of rent, interest and profits; and his support for the Knights of Labor and the Socialist Labor party placed him 'beyond the pale of respectability'" (1953: 106).

17/ C.H. Hopkins says: "When clergymen analyzed Socialism they unanimously rejected it as an economic and social philosophy. The more progressive regarded it as a symptom of social illness. . . .none embraced it prior to 1890." (1940: 69-70).

18/ C.H. Hopkins says that the Knights of Labor (1886), composed of over half a million members, bore a "socialist tinge," and the American Federation of Labor, in its infancy in the 1880's, contained only a minority of committed Socialists within its membership (1940: 69).

19/ J. Dillenberger and C. Welch point out: "It was at the point of the criticism of the competitive and predatory features of unregulated capitalism that Christian ethics and the Socialist critique seemed to have the most in common" (1954: 250).

20/ C.H. Hopkins, in agreement with Dombrowski's understanding of Christian Socialism as a neutralization of the Socialist revolutionary thrust says: "Thus weaving a socialized version of the Christian doctrine of man into contemporary reform ideologies, the Christian Socialists compounded an inclusive social philosophy of gradualism so broad that N.D. Gilman characterized them as 'something like a society for the the propagation of virtue in general'" (1940: 182).

21/ According to M. Curti, "The Marxists. . . regarded the theological basis of Christian Socialism as mere supernaturalism and the rejection of the class struggle as a source of fatal weakness" (1964: 613).

22/ W.D.P. Bliss was more activist than philosopher. In 1887 he aided in the organization of CAIL which helped mediate labor disputes and frame labor legislation. He published *The Dawn*, the only Christian Socialist newspaper of the period. In 1890, he resigned his Grace Church Mission pastorate to open the

Mission of the Carpenter. In 1914 he established the American Fabian League, and in 1895 the National Educational and Economic League. *The Dawn* and the *Encyclopedia of Social Reform* (1897) remain his most significant literary contributions.

23/ Herron's doctrine of social salvation through collective sacrifice was in large part responsible for the founding of the Christian Commonwealth Colony, a short-lived experimental settlement in Georgia during the 1890's. It was the first community to make use of the term "social gospel" to describe its own philosophy. Herron was also instrumental in the founding of the American Institute of Christian Sociology at Chautauqua (1893) (Quint, 1953: 131, 132).

24/ Aside from sections of *Christianizing the Social Order*, Rauschenbusch's interpretation of Socialism constitutes the core of the following articles: "Some Words about Socialism in America" (1890); "The Ideals of the Social Reformers" (1896); "State Help vs. Self-Help or Paternalism in Government" (1898); "Dogmatic and Practical Socialism" (1901); "Practical Measures of Socialism" (1901); "Socialism is of Two Kinds: The Practical and the Dogmatic Contrasted" (1901); "Socialism" (1908); "Contributions Socialism Has Made to the Social Feeling of Which We Are All Conscious" (1909); "Socialism is Coming" (1909); "The Social Awakening of the Churches of America" (1911); "The Trend Toward Collectivism" (1912); and published posthumously, "Christian Socialism" in *A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics* (1921).

25/ Cf. D. Sharpe, 1942:9; R. Handy, 1966: 262.

26/ There is conflicting information regarding Rauschenbusch's relation to the Christian Socialist Fellowship, a group organized in 1906 "to obtain the adherence of the churches to the principles of international Socialism and to secure their allegiance to the Socialist Party of America as the means of accomplishing the Christian revolution" (Hopkins, 1940: 233). C.H. Hopkins says that although Rauschenbusch contributed to its newspaper, *The Christian Socialist*, he was never a member of the Fellowship (1940: 243). V. Bodein, on the other hand, says: "Rauschenbusch belonged to the Christian Socialist Fellowship and was its executive secretary" (1944: 66, 424).

27/ Janet Fishburn says that Rauschenbusch was "the only Social Gospel figure to condemn two major elements in the American argument for capitalistic competition: the unlimited accumulation of wealth and the absolute sanctity of private property (1981: 116). However, she adds, "Rauschenbusch advocated the redistribution, not the abolition, of private property" (1981: 116).

28/ A longer list of reforms includes direct primaries, woman's suffrage, the initiative, referendum, and recall, regulation of interstate commerce, revision of banking and currency laws, effective antitrust legislation,

municipal ownership of public utilities, the income tax, the eight-hour day, prohibition of child labor, safeguards against industrial accidents and occupational diseases, and either strict regulation of the liquor traffic or its outright prohibition (Hudson: 1961, 315-316).

29/ Of the idea of evolution, Rauschenbusch himself said: "The doctrine of evolution is a daring hypothesis and generalization drawn from [the] historical method, and whatever its fate, its fertilizing influence in modern thought cannot be gainsaid" ("Influence of Historical Studies on Theology," c. 1917-1918: 58).

30/ S. Ahlstrom offers a brief timeline for the publication of Darwin's seminal works:

> In 1858 at a historic meeting of the Royal Society two papers on the origin of the species were read: one by Charles Darwin, the other by Russell Wallace. In the following year Darwin's *Origin of the Species* appeared, the most important book of the century. After a decade of fierce controversy, Darwin in 1871 published *The Descent of Man* in which he drew the human species within the same encompassing hypothesis. Never since the scientific revolution completed by Newton had the humanistic and religious traditions of the West been confronted by a greater need for adjustment and reformulation (1972: 767).

31/ C.H. Hopkins terms these implications a "sociological rationalization of the liberal doctrines of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humankind." (1940: 126).

They may also be seen as the social implications of a Christian interpretation of Darwinian evolution.

32/ Of specific instances of Social Christianity's rejection of Social Darwinism articulated by Spencer and Sumner, R. Hofstadter notes the responses of Washington Gladden, Henry George, and Edward Bellamy. He quotes:

> [For Washington Gladden] 'The principle of competition, the survival of the fittest, is the law of plants and brutes and brutish men, but it is not the highest law of civilized society. The higher principle of good will, of mutual help, begins to operate in the social order, and the struggle for existence disappears with the progress of the race.
>
> . . .
>
> In *A Perplexed Philosopher* (1892) Henry George declared, 'Mr. Spencer is like one who might insist that each should swim for himself in crossing a river, ignoring the fact that

> some had been artificially provided with corks and others artificially loaded with lead.
>
> . . .
>
> [For Edward Bellamy] 'If the richest were in fact the best . . . there would have been no social question, and disparities of condition would have been willingly endured; but the competitive system apparently causes the unfittest to survive, not in the sense that the rich are worse than the poor, but that the system encourages the worst in the character of all classes.'
>
> . . .
>
> The orthodox Marxists also disliked Spencerian Darwinism and attempted to turn it to their own purposes. They were willing to use the struggle for existence to validate the class struggle, but not individualistic competition (1945: 109, 113, 114, 117).

33/ Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, James J. Hill, John Fisk and Daniel Drew were the more prominent exponents of the Gospel of Wealth.

34/ As reported by R. Hofstadter, the necessity for state interference was accepted not only by social progressives and social gospelers, but others as well. State intervention was accepted by those who adhered to the Wilson-Brandeis-LaFollette view that competition was inherently desirable and needed to be protected and those who held the Roosevelt . . . VanHise view that the concentration of wealth was inevitable. Brandeis stated the situation in 1912 when he said:

> . . . the right of competition must be limited in order to preserve it. For excesses of competition lead to monopoly, as excesses of liberty lead to absolutism . . . . The issue . . . is: regulated competition versus regulated monopoly (1945: 121).

35/ D. Davis traces Rauschenbusch's encounter with Darwinism back to Harrison E. Webster, a professor of zoology at Rochester. According to Davis, Webster "proselytized evolutionary thought" and introduced Rauschenbusch to LeConte, H.A. Nicholson and T.H. Huxley during Rauschenbusch's senior year. Davis says:

> Since Rauschenbusch attended Webster's lectures and admits that they were most engrossing, it appears that the issue of evolution confronted him as early as 1883. . . . Webster introduced Rauschenbusch to evolutionary thought and pointed him to Henry George. George, in turn, added the basic principles of Socialism to his thought system" (1978: 259-261).

36/ In complete agreement with Lester Ward, Rauschenbusch argued that the social processes must be directed by human intervention for the good of all. Charles Strain says: "Rauschenbusch's insistence that the evolution of society must be consciously molded, that it could not be left to blind chance signified his acceptance of the basic parameters of the public debate" (1978a: 28).

37/ D. Davis says:

> [For Rauschenbusch] Cooperation . . . will be the next stage of evolutionary development. . . The three-stage theory of progress sees the present as the second, transitional stage to a future which may include visions of the past. . . . The next stage of human evolution is to be cooperative and altruistic, but it will also be collectivist. Rauschenbusch promotes a three-stage theory of social evolution: the past and present, coming socialism and social Christianity, and the final stage, the Kingdom of God (1978: 267).

38/ Lyman Beecher represented the thinking of many when he commended the new societies working with the poor, but objected to public aid as a strategy that was both contrary to the economic system and ultimately degrading to the poor themselves (White, 1978: 51-52).

39/ J. Brauer reports that in response to the railroad strike of 1877 one of the leading religious journals wrote:

> If the club of the policeman knocking out the brains of the rioter will answer, than well and good; but if it does not properly meet the exigency, then bullets and bayonets, canister and grape -- with no sham or pretense, in order to frighten men, but with fearful and destructive reality -- constitute the one remedy and the one duty of the hour. . . Napoleon was right when he said that the way to deal with a mob was to exterminate it (Quoted in Brauer, 1965: 237).

40/ The social gospel valued its relation to the physical and social sciences. In 1916, Rauschenbusch defined the social gospel, in part, as "a fusion between the new understanding created by the social sciences, and the teachings and moral ideals of Christianity" (SPJ, 1916: 196). In *A Theology for the Social Gospel* he says: "The social gospel registers the fact that for the first time in history the spirit of Christianity has had a chance to form a working partnership with real social and psychological science" (1917: 5).

Visser 't Hooft characterizes the social gospel's relation to science as one of its distinguishing characteristics:

> . . . it is one of the outstanding characteristics of the social gospel that it believes not only in the compatibility of science and Christianity but also in the indispensability of their mutual interpretation (1928: 149).

41/ Hutchison implies this in his interpretation when he says:

> It was something else again to argue, as Social Gospelers did, that social salvation precedes individual salvation both temporarily and in importance. Even to give social reform an equal, nonderivative status was a move quite distinct in theory from what evangelicals generally could support. It was this theoretical elevation of social salvation. . . that made the Social Gospel a distinctive movement (1976:165).

42/ Thus Visser 't Hooft can rightly say: "The social gospel. . . is more than an application of Christian principles to society; it is also an application of social principles to Christianity; or to put it shortly: it is a form of interpretation of religious and social thought" (1928: 16).

43/ Two questions regarding the social gospel lie outside the parameters of this study but can be summarily considered here. The first question concerns the origins of the social gospel. Although the American social gospel, in its expression, is indigenous to America and the country's social situation during the second half of the nineteenth century, critics who have considered the question agree that it had roots in Europe and England. Sydney Ahlstrom says:

> Although its Puritanic concern for the commonwealth is. . . embedded in an indigenous tradition which is unique, almost every major new element of the Social Gospel betrayed enormous indebtedness to two major foreign impulses. From Britain came a legacy of inspiration drawn from the Christian Socialism of Charles Kingsley, Frederick D. Maurice, John Ruskin, William H. Fremantle, and the architects of Fabian Socialism. From Germany came nearly its entire biblical and theological grounding, as well as the historical view of economic theory by which the social statistics of *Manchesterismus* was to be overcome. British and German developments, in short, provided a vital prologue to American Social Gospel theory (1972: 788-789).

William Hutchison, in an article entitled "The Americanness of the Social Gospel," a detailed study of the origins of the social gospel, holds that, except in its expression, American Social Christianity was almost wholly derivative. He says:

> It seems to be true that American Social Christianity in the late nineteenth century, like American cultural expression generally at the time, expressed greater humanism and cultural confidence than its counterparts abroad. In that sense, it was of course 'unique'; but so was the British or German Social Christianity that exhibited other peculiarities. That the social movement was in any other relevant sense indigenous, or peculiar to American Christianity or uniquely successful, appears. . . to be a doubtful proposition (1975: 381).

Although some critics have described the social gospel as a uniquely American phenomenon (Cf. C.H. Hopkins, 1940: 326; Obenhaus quoting Van Dusen, 1976: 104; and Fishburn, 1981: 3) as early as 1936, Maurice Latta, in an article entitled, "The Background of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism," foreshadowed the conclusions of the later studies of Ahlstrom and Hutchison when he said:

> Although the Social Gospel has been described as 'the first expression of American religious life which is truly born in America itself,' it was evoked on the American scene by forces world wide in scope which have everywhere brought about similar reactions in the field of religion. The full setting of the industrial revolution in country after country of the Western civilization created such problems for religion as to lead within a generation to a vigorous enunciation of a social ethic by alert religious leaders of the country (1936: 256).

In the end, it must be concluded that the American social gospel is distinct in its expression of a social Christianity, but it is not unique to America at the time of the industrial revolution.

A second question regarding the origins of the social gospel concerns the nature of its beginnings in American Protestantism. The question has been debated as to whether the social gospel was a response to the external stimulus of the industrial Revolution, or whether it was part of an evolving tradition within Protestantism, beginning with the Great Awakening and developing with the Protestant goal of a Christianized America. The dialogue is set in its proper perspective by Hopkins and White when they explain:

> As a result of Arthur M. Schlesinger's seminal essay of 1931, 'A Critical Period in American Religion, 1875-1900,' American religion came to be examined in terms of a challenge response framework. Schlesinger had suggested that American religion in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was reshaped by the way it met the challenge of urbanization

> and industrialization on the social-political front, and Darwinian thought and German biblical criticism on the intellectual front. Schlesinger's emphasis was on reaction rather than initiative (1976: xiii).

Aaron Abell and Henry F. May are cited by White and Hopkins as examples of Schlesinger's stimulus-response perspective. Here "social causation rather than ideological or theological causation is the dominant rationale" (1976: xiii).

A second counter-perspective emerged which stressed the social gospel as a response growing out of the Protestant effort to Christianize America (Hopkins-White, 1976: xiv). Paul Carter characterizes this position. He says:

> The American churches found the Social Gospel in the course of working out the logic of their evangelistic quest 'for a Christian America.' They [those who hold this position] point out that changes in the content of American religious belief, nonsocial in character, had to take place before the Social Gospel became possible, and that these changes were not simply the product of social and economic forces (1954: 10-11).

H. Richard Niebuhr, Sidney Mead and Robert T. Handy are cited by Hopkins and White as exponents of this second perspective. Hopkins and White explain:

> . . . Sidney Mead and Robert T. Handy have emphasized the dynamism and integrity of American religious traditions. Handy has forged the thesis that the period 1830 - 1930 can best be understood as a more or less continuous attempt by American Protestantism to 'Christianize America' first through revivalism and then through the social gospel. One of the most able historians of the social gospel, Handy states in the introduction to *The Social Gospel in America*: 'The response to the problems of an urbanized and industrialized society was shaped by the patterns of thought and action that had long been characteristic of American Protestantism' (1976: xiv).

Critics have supported one side or the other. For example, Merle Curti in arguing for a stimulus-response interpretation says:

> It was not until the issues of industrialism became sharpened in the post-Civil War years that a well-formulated body of ideas emerged to stir the souls of Christians and to guide their actions. . . . it was not until the 1870's and 1880's that the actualities of industrial capitalism contradicted Christian ethics

> on such a scale as to awaken a strong protest against it among the clergy. Nor was it until these decades that the strength of Protestant Christianity in the large cities was seriously challenged by the growing indifference of the working masses for whom Protestantism, whether in its evangelical form or in its more modern scientific guise, offered little help in meeting the harsh conditions of life in the sweatshops and slums. Once the Christian Protestant interest was thus jeopardized and challenged, a positive and constructive response to the evils of industrialism and the ills of workers was almost inevitable (1964: 611).

On the other hand, William Sweet argues that the development of the social gospel was one of complete continuity with a dynamic Protestant tradition. He says:

> The roots of the social gospel are to be found in the very nature of American Protestantism itself. . . . the social gospel is definitely in the stream of American religious development, which rises in left-wing Protestantism; derives from the frontier emphasis and revivalism; and has been fed by the Calvinistic and Arminian tributaries (1947: 11, 13).

Hopkins and White point out that the two views are not exclusive of one another. They point to Henry May who holds a stimulus-response interpretation for the origins of the social gospel but also warns that we should be aware of "the inner vitality and continuity of the religious tradition that shaped the response" (Hopkins-White, 1976: xv). Hopkins and White themselves hold to a combination of the two views. They conclude:

> A dominant evangelical tradition had long emphasized an individual salvation. Now the Church was awakened to the possibilities of a social salvation as well. The awakening of the Church to a social gospel was the product of both the presence of external events and internal continuity of theological reflection and social action (1978: 3).

In another study, authored singly by White, White says: "If the social gospel arose as a response to the external events of urbanization and industrialization, it is also true to say that it was part of the continuing dynamic of an internal theological heritage" (1978: 55). Here the Protestant response to the industrial situation in the form of the social gospel is explained by recognizing it as a response to the social situation in which nineteenth century Protestantism found itself but a response enabled largely by Protestantism's own inherent dynamism, and its vision of a Christianized America.

44/ Hopkins also points out that as such the social gospel was not concerned with problems of war, imperialism, race relations, democracy or the use of force (1940: 319).

45/ Paul Carter distinguishes three groups within the social gospel: a conservative wing, characterized by an individualistic, voluntaristic social reform perspective, not unlike that of the Salvation Army; a radical wing, characterized by a renunciation of the existing social order in favor of a totally reconstructed social order; and progressive center which required both institutional and personal conversion. Institutional change in the context of existing society was considered here neither synonymous with or by itself capable of ushering in the kingdom (1954: 13).

46/ Richard T. Ely's economic theories were the most influential within the social gospel movement. Central to an economics founded in Christianity was his idea of solidarity. Solidarity meant that "the individual was bound by innumerable ties to his fellows and could not be considered in isolation from society" (Boller, 1969: 87). J.R. Everett characterizes Ely's solidarity in the following way:

> One aspect of man's existence could not be abstracted from the others. . . Human life was a complex of interacting and interrelated forces that produced specific actions. . . . The social solidarity of which Ely speaks implies not only a fellowship of interests and responsibilities, but also a unity of nature (1946: 79, 84).

For Ely, solidarity had ramifications for all realms of life. "In the economic sphere. . . it lead far away from laissez-faire and a profit system. . . [which were] disruptive forces in the social life (Everett, 1946: 93). Ely believed the Social Darwinist theories of survival of the fittest applied to a chaotic, savage society but had nothing to do with the "sympathetic benevolence" required of modern civilization (Boller, 1969: 87). Ely was not a Marxist; aside from its atheism, he feared the threat to liberty posed by the concentration of all economic power in the hands of a central government (Boller, 1969: 87). In the conclusion to his *Socialism and Social Reform*, Ely says:

> One line of thought which has run through the entire treatment of practicable social reform is social solidarity. Men's interests are inextricably intertwined and we shall never become truly prosperous as long as there is any class of the population materially and morally wretched. As a social body we can no more be in a sound condition while we have a submerged tenth, than a man can be whose arms or legs are suffering with a foul and corrupting disease. Whether we will or not, we must, in a manner, rejoice together and suffer

> together. The sooner the idea of social solidarity, which is not only a doctrine but a real fact, is recognized in all its ramifications the better it will be for all of us (Quoted in Everett, 1946: 351).

47/ As noted earlier, a "unilinear and upward development of the course of human affairs," as an interpretation of Darwin, is a misreading of his theory of natural selection. Darwin's understanding of natural selection lacks a teleology. Only with the positing of an immanent God in the process of history were followers allowed to see "unilinear and upward development" in history. And, in the end, that development was understood to occur not without setbacks.

48/ Although the social gospel expressed the viewpoints of modernist liberals, its leading voice, Walter Rauschenbusch, was an evangelical liberal throughout his life. Although Rauschenbusch's theology was a mediational theology, it stood within the church rather than culture and sought to regenerate both society and theology from within the Christian tradition. H. Richard Niebuhr points out: "Though his theory of the relation of God and man often seemed liberal he continued to speak the language of the prophets and St. Paul" (1937: 194). Hopkins and White place the term "evangelical liberal" in a broader and clearer perspective. They explain:

> In recent years 'liberal' and 'evangelical' (rather than 'conservative') have been terms used in opposition, but Kenneth Cauthen insists that they must be used jointly to describe Walter Rauschenbusch and others for whom theology was a serious undertaking. These 'evangelical liberals' made the person and work of Jesus central, but at the same time sought a faith that could be mediated. . . (1976: 245).

Kenneth Cauthen says:

> Rauschenbusch was clearly an evangelical liberal. As George Hammer says, 'Rauschenbusch energetically strove for a Biblical foundation for his social gospel.' His aim was not to revise the ancient faith, but to recover it in modern form. . . . the teachings of Jesus constituted for him the norm of Christian thought (1962: 89).

49/ Cf. Dorothee Soelle who says in her work, *Political Theology*: ". . . political theology is [not]. . . another type of Social Gospel in which praxis simply swallows up theory" (1971: 58-59).

In Chapter 2 of the present study, Rauschenbusch's method will be understood positively in light of Soelle's own method.

50/ David Tracy points out:

> There seems every good reason to agree with the judgment of Wilhelm Pauck that neo-orthodoxy is not really a radically new alternative model for theology, but rather is a moment -- to be sure, a critical one -- in the larger liberal theological tradition. Pauck is, I believe, exactly right when he states: 'Orthodox theologies give rise to more orthodoxies; liberal theologies give rise to neo-orthodoxies' (1979: 27).

R.W. Fox's biography, *Reinhold Niebuhr* (1985), treats Niebuhr as a theologian who shared in the liberal perspective throughout his life. Fox points out that although *Moral Man and Immoral Society* sounded the death knell for an easy appropriation of the kingdom of God in history (140), Niebuhr's brother, H. Richard, understood it to be in the liberal tradition (145). For H. Richard, in Fox's interpretation:

> Reinhold was still for all his rhetorical militancy a thoroughgoing liberal. He had rigidly preserved the liberal conception of the self -- the rational agency of goodwill -- and the liberal idea of religion as a power for social transformation (145).

Fox understands Reinhold Niebuhr's *Nature and Destiny of Man* to be a reconciliation of liberal theology itself with his own scriptural heritage, producing a new liberal synthesis. For Fox,

> As Niebuhr passed his fortieth year he came back. . . to reappropriate his father's Biblical heritage. That act of repossession produced . . . a new synthesis in liberal theology . . . (147).

Throughout the biography, Fox points out that H. Richard perceived Reinhold's liberal perspective far more readily than did Reinhold himself. According to Fox, this remained a source of tension between them throughout their lives (165).

51/ Reinhold Niebuhr's relation to liberalism is a major theme of R.H. Stone's biography, *Reinhold Niebuhr: Prophet to Politicians* (1972). Stone traces Niebuhr's relation to liberalism. The first phase is comprised of his early period of intellectual development, the 1920's, in which sympathy is followed by disillusionment with liberalism. The second phase occurred during the 1930's, in which Niebuhr adopted and later rejected Socialism. The third phase, during the 1940's, embodies Niebuhr's creation of the Christian realist perspective. Finally, the 1950's evidences a rapprochement with political and religious liberalism. It is one of Stone's major theses that throughout the various periods, Niebuhr's critique of liberalism remained essentially the same: an attack on a cultural, humanistic optimism he perceived to be at the center of liberalism, whether expressed politically or theologically (128, 131). Stone believes Niebuhr to have

too polemically identified liberalism with optimism, and his attacks on a supreme confidence in the moral progress of human nature led to an unfair dismissal of the whole liberal tradition. Stone says:

> Niebuhr's exposure of the optimism of modern man often led him to equate liberalism and optimism and to attack liberalism when the illusion he wanted to criticize was sentimental optimism. . . . Liberalism for Niebuhr necessarily included an illusion of optimism, and the illusion became the central theme in Niebuhr's attacks on it (38-39).

Stone believes that Niebuhr's appropriation of political liberalism in his later years was due "both to the recognition that the tendency to equate liberalism and optimism was mistaken and to the recognition of the achievements of liberal institutions and policies" (1972: 167).

52/ K. Cauthen points to the different perspectives of Niebuhr and Rauschenbusch with respect to the relation of love to history. Cauthen says:

> . . . while they agree that love is the supreme Christian virtue and the norm of the Christian life, they disagree with regard to its relationship to the empirical and historical life of men. For Rauschenbusch, love, though it is the highest virtue, is directly continuous with the virtues and spirit of brotherhood, social service, good will, democracy, unselfishness, etc. In short, love is immanentized. . . . Niebuhr, on the other hand, interprets love in an absolute and perfectionist sense. Love is transcendent to the empirical life of men and touches history only at its edge, although it is related dialectically to life and history . . . it . . . is a transcendent ideal which can never be identified with any human kingdom no matter how advanced (1962: 103).

53/ Donald Meyer points out that Rauschenbusch was far more realistic in his understanding of sin than liberalism was perceived to be. Meyer says: "So far as the nature of human nature was concerned, Rauschenbusch again and again exhibited a realism that liberals were later to be accused universally of having lacked" (Quoted in Hopkins and White, 1976: 269).

54/ Rauschenbusch never identified human progress as either the sole meaning of history or the meaning of the kingdom on earth.

Endnotes for Chapter II

55/ Max L. Stackhouse says in his introduction to Rauschenbusch's work, *Righteousness of the Kingdom*, "indeed, Rauschenbusch himself, not unlike the other major figures of the Social Gospel movement, appears little concerned about method" (1968: 27). It should be noted, however, that Shailer Mathews is a significant exception to this rule. Cf. Haight, 1988: 477-497.

56/ The attack on objectifying language about God is, in fact, for Thistleton, the motivation behind Bultmann's program of demythologization. Thistleton argues:

> [In Bultmann's existential critique of myth] What Bultmann has been criticizing is myth as that which conveys a world view. That the world view of the New Testament is incompatible. . . with modern science, certainly adds fuel to the fire. But this is not in itself the main reason behind the call to demythologize. The reason is a much deeper one.
> . . .
> . . . in a key statement in one of his replies to his critics he writes, 'The restatement of mythology is a requirement of faith itself. For faith needs to be emancipated from its association with every world view expressed in objective terms. . . . Like the doctrine of justification it destroys every false security. . . . The man who wishes to believe in God as his God must realize that he has nothing in his hand on which to base his faith. . . Security can be found only by abandoning all security' (1980: 263).

57/ Thistleton points out that Heidegger's analysis of Being has rightly come under attack as individualistic and isolationist. Quoting Marjorie Green, Thistleton reports:

> On the one hand, through the isolation of the individual in Heidegger's analysis we can come to see. . . the ethical importance of the concept of integrity or authenticity. But there is also a problem here. Heidegger has stated that he is not concerned with theology or ethics. . . .Heidegger's notion of responsibility, Marjorie Green insists 'is not, in the last analysis, responsibility for anything or in any setting beyond the given situation of the individual himself. Human being facing its own non-being alone and in dread is human being emptied of substance. . . . Heidegger's man of resolve is wanting in all sense of community with his fellow beings. *Mitdasein*, being together, occurs only on the level of forfeiture (i.e. fallenness). The authentic individual has no

> friend or fellow. . . . It is a doubly self-centered philosophy: a philosophy of the individual, centered in his own responsibility to become himself' (1980: 203).

58/ As discussed earlier, the idea of solidarity was part of the social and intellectual milieu of Rauschenbusch's day. It was central to the philosophies of Socialism and Darwinism. Kenneth Cauthen points out that it was a major theme of theological liberalism as well: ". . . there emerged a stress on the solidarity of men; individuals [were] . . . not discrete units like rocks on a pile but . . . organically related to each other as the members of the physical body" (1962: 11). The idea was central to the development of the social gospel itself. Ronald White points out that "watchwords" of the social gospel, the "fatherhood of God" and the "brotherhood of man," were "a way of depicting what they understood to be the solidarity of men and women in both the Christian community and the world" (1978: 55). Dores Sharpe describes Social Christianity as a religion which "profoundly regenerate[d] the old philosophic, economic, and religious individualism and issued in a new and higher form of self realization in which the individual knows himself as part of the universal solidarity" (1942: 443). Anna M. Singer sums up the ideal of solidarity and awareness of it among Rauschenbusch's socially concerned contemporaries when she says: "men are learning that our personal life is rooted in the life of humanity and that it flourishes in that soil, deriving its richest nourishment from it and living because others live" (1926: 14). For Rauschenbusch, there was a growing awareness of the nature of human life as one of solidarity and recognition of the need for its implementation in social structures if society was to be regenerated. He characterizes the beginning of the twentieth century as the dawn of a new age of solidarity. For Rauschenbusch: "We are emerging from the era of individualism. The principle of coordination, cooperation and solidarity is being applied in ever widening areas and is gaining a remarkable hold on the spirits of men" (*The Independent*, May 12, 1904: 47).

59/ Rauschenbusch acknowledges his debt to Royce and Wundt's *Volkerpsychologie* in his *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917).

60/ It should be noted that Rauschenbusch's critical recognition of the institutional generation of ideas adapted specifically to institutional survival comes close to Soelle's ideological critique which begins with the recognition that there are superstructures which no longer bear reference to reality and are outmoded, repressive and resistant to critique or change. Although Rauschenbusch's work does not contain a developed method of ideological critique, he does criticize institutions of society when their ideologies conflict with a social understanding of the nature of human existence.

61/ It must be noted that even though Rauschenbusch can be characterized as a "strategist for the social gospel", he was fully aware of the

dangers of the use of scripture as proof texts for personal beliefs and programs. He eschewed it as methodologically unacceptable. He says:

> To interpret the Bible well we need historical knowledge, historical method and historical spirit, otherwise we shall merely put our ideas in the Bible and fetch them out again and then claim divine authority for our own pet ideas (Quoted in Altschuler, 1979: 143).

62/ Rauschenbusch's understanding of the social order was significantly influenced by the Christian economist Richard T. Ely. Rauschenbusch was also influenced by the work of Schleiermacher, Rother, Ritschl, Hermann, Troeltsch, Ragaz, Kutter, Matthieu, Benz, Reinhardt, Sabatier, Socretau, Fallot, Monod, Gounelle, Passy, Maurice, Kingsley and Harnack. Cf. V. Bodein, 1944: 101.

Endnotes for Chapter III

63/ A comparative reading of Rauschenbusch's interpretations of the kingdom shows a slight shift in that interpretation from one which was somewhat transcendent and spiritual to one which became more immanent in humankind and evolved in history. The shift is evidenced in Rauschenbusch's interpretation of how Jesus modified his inherited conception of the kingdom. Rauschenbusch understands Jesus to have accepted the inherited notion of the kingdom held by the Jewish nation as a whole (RK, 1891: 79). For Rauschenbusch, Jesus also accepted the kingdom vision of John the Baptist (CSC, 1907: 53). Thus, according to Rauschenbusch, the way to the faith of Jesus is through the understanding of the religion of the Jewish nation and its kingdom hope. However, Rauschenbusch believes that Jesus accepted the kingdom hope not as a slave but as a son (CSO, 1912: 57), modifying and transforming it (RK, 1891: 82; CSC, 1907: 54). According to Rauschenbusch "these corrections... embody Jesus' most distinctive contributions to the Kingdom ideal" (CSO, 1912: 57). A brief chronological comparison of Rauschenbusch's delineation of these modifications shows him moving from a spiritual conception of the kingdom to a more concrete, historical interpretation beginning with *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907).

In *Righteousness of the Kingdom* (1891), Rauschenbusch argues that Jesus modified the kingdom in four ways: in the direction of 1) universality, 2) spirituality, 3) spiritual rather than external means of progress, and 4) toward recognition of the value of the spiritual dimension of the individual human personality (83-98). In his argument for Jesus' modification of the kingdom in the direction of universality, Rauschenbusch holds that faith rather than national boundaries determined the membership in the reign of God. He says:

> Faith and not Judaism qualified for membership in the Kingdom. . . . The Kingdom of God, as Christ saw it, was not outwardly limited by the boundaries of any one nation (84).
>
> . . .
>
> In place of a small kingdom organized on rigid laws and by its smallness and homogeneity capable of uniformity, the theocracy was now to be a kingship of God in all nations binding their diversity together by unity of spirit and oneness of sovereignty (98).

Rauschenbusch then argues that Jesus changed the basis of citizenship in the kingdom from natural descent and outward observation of the law to spiritual descent and inward obedience to the will of God. In this second modification of the kingdom interpretation, Jesus

> . . . proposed to found his Kingdom on spirit and not on matter (85).
>
> . . .
>
> Christ initiated his Kingdom on earth by establishing a community of spiritual men, in inward communion with God and in outward obedience to him. . . . By the power of the Spirit dwelling in it, it was to overcome the spirit dominant in the world and thus penetrate and transform the world (87).

In Jesus' third modification of the kingdom hope Rauschenbusch believes Jesus to have changed his nation's understanding of the means of the kingdom's progress from an external means to an internal, spiritual means. Rauschenbusch argues,

> Jesus repudiated external means, force and display, and relied upon truth and love and the powers of the Spirit to overcome opposing forces and establish the Kingdom (98).
>
> . . .
>
> External means can work external and mechanical changes; they cannot change the spirit or purify the spiritual life. The Kingdom of God was to be based on the spiritual life, therefore carnal means could not establish it (91).

Finally, Rauschenbusch understands Jesus to have modified the kingdom in the direction of the recognition of the value of the human personality, specifically its spiritual dimension. For Rauschenbusch,

> The covenant of God with Israel was a covenant with the nation. . . and yet there was that in the soul of the godly man which sought direct access to the heart of God (95).
>
> . . .

> Christ recognizes the separate value of the human personality. He makes it individually responsible. He assures it of personal forgiveness and offers it satisfaction for all its desires. He offers the perfection of personal life to those that receive him (97).

Although this early work emphasizes an interpretation of the kingdom as comparatively more spiritualized than his later work, it must be noted that Rauschenbusch consistently interprets the kingdom as a corporate reality and never separates it from this world. In a summary statement Rauschenbusch says:

> This then is the program of the Christian revolution: the Kingdom of God on earth. It includes a twofold aim; the regeneration of every individual to a divine sonship and eternal life, and the victory of the Spirit of Christ over the spirit of this world in every form of human society and a corresponding alteration in all the institutions formed by human society. . . .Every success in the one is a means for a new success in the other (RK, 1891: 110-111).

Christianity and the Social Crisis (1907) evidences, in a major way, Rauschenbusch's more immanentized understanding of the kingdom as a reality organically progressing in the historical life of humankind, transforming its social structures and acting as both motive force and teleology of history. A brief summary of Rauschenbusch's interpretation of Jesus' modifications of the kingdom hope here indicate the shift in Rauschenbusch's interpretation. Although the kingdom remains a spiritual reality, its nature is understood as a reality which progresses in the events of history. Rauschenbusch interprets Jesus to have modified the understanding of the progress of the kingdom from violent means to organic growth, the nature of the kingdom from a national to a universal reality, and its relation to history from solely future reality to include present event (57-65). Thus, rather than spiritual growth, organic growth is stressed; the emphasis on universality remains; and present event rather than future reality is emphasized. For Rauschenbusch:

> The Jewish hope became a human hope with universal scope. The old intent gaze into the future was turned to faith in present realities and beginnings and found its task here and now (1907: 64-65).

Christianizing the Social Order (1912) carries on Rauschenbusch's immanentized understanding of the kingdom. Although it is a spiritual reality, it is understood as a universal human hope in historical terms. For Rauschenbusch,

> . . . Jesus repudiated the use of force. . . . He insisted on sharing its rights with all and turned it from a Jewish to a

> broadly human ideal. . . .he democratized the idea of the Kingdom and put all who sought it under the law of service. . . . he set it within the domain of secular and ethical relations. . . . he worked toward the law of gradual growth. . . . to him it was both future and present (66).

The Social Principles of Jesus (1916) likewise emphasizes the social and historical dimensions of the kingdom. Rauschenbusch says:

> Under his [Jesus'] hands the Jewish imperialistic dream changed into a call for universal human fraternity. He repeatedly and emphatically explained the coming of the Kingdom in terms taken from biological growth, and his thoughts seem to have verged away from the popular catastrophic ideas toward ideas of organic development. These changes. . . represent Jesus' own contribution to the history of the Kingdom ideal, and they are all in the same direction in which the modern mind has moved (56).

64/ Max L. Stackhouse, in his introduction to the publication of *The Righteousness of the Kingdom* (1968), identifies three ways in which the kingdom, in Rauschenbusch's work, manifests itself in history. The kingdom's manifestation in history has ideational, natural and institutional expressions. The ideational aspect is manifested in the concept of messianic theocracy. Messianic theocracy indicates those "historical moments where racial, class and ethnic barriers are overcome, where a holy esprit de corps is developed in a covenantal community . . ." (33). Stackhouse finds evidence of the kingdom's manifestation in nature in Rauschenbusch's understanding of the sexual instinct as a social instinct. According to Stackhouse: "[For Rauschenbusch] The sexual instinct . . . is a natural social drive. . . [and] as nature and natural drives sometimes provide sensitivity to universality they also drive toward new centers of human concern, providing a basis for the social solidarity and larger groupings of humanity" (34). Another example of the kingdom's manifestation in nature is the concept of land in Rauschenbusch's thought. Stackhouse says: "Land is the primary means of production. . . . Where land passes from the control of the community to the control of a few, both the resources and the community are plundered . . ." (34). When it passes into the hands of the community we have an expression of the kingdom. Finally, the kingdom is manifested through institutions in Rauschenbusch's notion of a Christianized social order. Here "within the confines of the historical change a relatively better order can improve the human situation if based on Christian principles of social life driving toward the institutional realization of the values of the messianic theocracy and the fraternity and socialism of 'natural' relationships" (36).

Stackhouse relates these three expressions to one another in the demonstration of how the kingdom provides Rauschenbusch with a framework by which he exegetes history. Stackhouse explains:

> The Kingdom of God functions as a discriminating principle as to what is authentically historical and what is destructive of the historical (31).
> . . .
> . . . Rauschenbusch. . . welds together a theological-social vision of the Kingdom of God -- an interpretive frame for reading the dimensions and directions of history and a goal that ever transcends man's accomplishments (42).

The only observation that may be added to this analysis is the perception that each of these historical manifestations identified by Stackhouse is fundamentally determined by the character of solidarity. The theocratic expression of the kingdom requires a covenanted community under the reign of God. Expressions of the kingdom in nature through the sexual instinct "drive toward" and create organicity within society. Stackhouse himself says: "We see . . . that. . .there is a 'necessary' development toward an *organon*, a fraternal socialistic order implied by fundamental structures of 'nature' such as sex and land" (35). Finally, central to the institutional manifestation of the kingdom is the transformation of the institutions of the social life of humanity along the lines of human solidarity. For Rauschenbusch the test for all institutional life was that of the bonding or division of humanity (cf. CSC, 1907: 71).

The kingdom's moments of manifestation in history, which determine what is authentically historical and are identified as theocratic, natural and institutional expressions by Stackhouse, can be seen to be, first, moments of the expression of solidarity in the ideational, natural and institutional aspects of human life.

65/ In Rauschenbusch's thought, the kingdom's beginnings are on divine initiative but the kingdom's progress is not separate from human participation and cooperation. The kingdom's progress depends on human effort and support of the forces of good already at work in the world. Melvin Vulgamore referring to the thesis of Max Stackhouse, says:

> . . . as Stackhouse has convincingly demonstrated through an analysis of the superstructural and substructural aspects of his thought, Rauschenbusch had his own eschatological presuppositions. He believed that Jesus' teaching of the kingdom of God is the juncture of the superstructural (in this case, the idea of the messianic theocracy) and the substructural (the work of good men in socio-economic spheres to promote brotherhood and a better society in general). The actualization of this concurrence is the real direction of history, 'the eschaton to which the small group is the witness and the prophet, educating all humanity' (1967: 530).

66/ C.H. Hopkins points out that by 1900, with the outstanding exception of Walter Rauschenbusch and others of the Brotherhood of the Kingdom, exponents of Social Christianity, e.g., Lyman Abbott, Shailer Mathews, Francis Greenwood Peabody, understood their new faith in terms of the social teachings of Jesus rather than the kingdom ideal (1940: 205-206). However, Hopkins adds that:

> All writers. . . agreed that in the mind of Jesus the love of God was to evidence itself in human affairs in the coming of the kingdom (1940: 208).

67/ For a more detailed analysis of the arguments of both Weiss and Schweitzer, and their place in historical studies, see Howard Kee, *Jesus in History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1970).

68/ Robert Handy points out that Rauschenbusch and the social gospelers of his day believed that they were following the best critical canons of their time with respect to the historical interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus (1966: 78).

69/ Rauschenbusch's optimism was not without qualification and although his modified optimism has been discussed earlier in this study we may note that Clifton Olmstead places Rauschenbusch's evolutionary, progressivist stance in perspective when he says:

> As for the progress of the Kingdom, Rauschenbusch was restrained in his optimism; he believed in God's immanence and in progressive perfection but never separated these ideas from his concept of human sinfulness (1960: 493).

Endnotes for Chapter IV

70/ Visser 't Hooft, an important critic of the theologically liberal perspective of the social gospel and Rauschenbusch, is skeptical of the notion of continuity between the divine purposes and human instinct. Visser 't Hooft believes Rauschenbusch's view to blur the distinction between a Christian ethic and a humanistic ethic, baptizing as Christian that which is merely the best in social customs of the day. He argues:

> When therefore it is asserted that many of the principles of Jesus are already dominant in social life this really means in most cases that a number of social customs or practices can be found which whether motivated by the Christian spirit or not, have apparently the same social effects as we would expect to

> result from the application of definitely Christian principles (1928: 49).

Rauschenbusch would argue that "we must not forget that Jesus presupposes the plain moral convictions of humanity, and that he will not allow his followers to drop back of the lines of righteousness drawn by the past experience of the race" (RK, 1891: 65). Rauschenbusch would also argue that "every advance toward the Kingdom of God. . . the true social order [also] involves a raising of the standards accepted by society" (SPJ, 1916: 90).

71/ For a complete discussion of the failure of the church to undertake the work of social reconstruction in a systematic way, see Rauschenbusch's discussion in *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 1907: 143-210.

72/ For a summary of Rauschenbusch's understanding of the changes in the social institutions of the family, organized religion, education, and the institutions of democracy which had rendered them in large part Christianized, see his discussion in *Christianizing the Social Order*, 1912: 128-155.

73/ In his article, "Walter Rauschenbusch: A Resource for Public Theology" (1978), Charles Strain argues that if Rauschenbusch was to discredit the evolutionary doctrine of the "inexorability of the law of tooth and nail" (28), he was required to create a "law-like generalization" (28) concerning the nature of love that would be an effective counterpart to the Social Darwinist philosophy. For Strain:

> Christian love would have to be seen as a sanctification and transformation of humanity's instinct for cooperation, an instinct fully as strong as the selfish drive for survival (29).

Although the effects of Rauschenbusch's Christianization of the human instinct of solidarity creates an effective counterpart to the Social Darwinist doctrine of the competitive instinct, it should be noted that Rauschenbusch's understanding of the human condition of solidarity was not created as a response in the debate with the Social Darwinists. Rauschenbusch's perspective on the social, solidaristic nature of human existence was a fundamental orientation in his thinking worked out early on in his ministry in light of the experience of the poverty and oppression of the working class to whom he ministered in his Baptist pastorate. An understanding of the solidarity of human existence and a belief in the fundamental naturalness and goodness of human cooperation would have developed in Rauschenbusch's work irrespective of whether or not Social Darwinist theories were drafted to rationalize competitive capitalism. Thus, although, according to Strain, "Rauschenbusch did evolve his model within an arena of public discourse" (29), for Rauschenbusch, the parameters of the debate were larger than the theories of Social Darwinism, and Rauschenbusch's concern

was determined by the effects of the economic system on the lives of many, boundaries considerably larger than those of Social Darwinism.

74/ In his essay, "Toward a Generic Analysis of a Classic of the Social Gospel: An Essay-Review of Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis*" (1978), Charles Strain argues that a critical social theory was necessary to Rauschenbusch and the social gospel if the biblical command to love was not to be turned into a "soothing syrup" and the Christian community left without guidelines for a reconstruction. Strain says:

> Without a 'science of society' -- read, critical social theory -- the latter day iniquities hidden under an aura of personal respectability would go unmasked, the injunction of the second great commandment would be condensed into a soothing syrup' and the race, lacking the means for conscious cooperation would continue to stumble in the dark along the tortuous route of progress. Without a critical theory, the programs of the religious community to meliorate the social malaise would merit condemnation as sheer quackery (533).

While it is true that the regeneration of the social order required a social theory in order that the second great commandment of love be heard, it is also true that the social gospelers, particularly Rauschenbusch, began with a social theory of solidarity, rather than developing one in retrospect, and were in fact anxious about religious rather than social acceptance of their analysis. In the words of Robert Handy, quoted earlier:

> The movement needed to demonstrate that it was rooted in the biblical word, that indeed it was a gospel and not merely a reflection of contemporary social and cultural anxieties (1966: 60).

Toward this end Rauschenbusch strove to ground his social theory in scripture. Rauschenbusch began with a critical theory of society guided by an understanding of the social nature of human existence and then sought its validation in scripture rather than moving from scripture to social theory, as Strain seems to argue. Rauschenbusch's social theory constituted the pre-understanding with which he approached scripture rather than the conclusion to his reading of scripture.

75/ Rauschenbusch believed that the attainment of great wealth was always achieved by unjust means. In his article, "How Rich Have I a Right to Be?" (1894), he explains:

> . . .if anyone examines the principle sources of large fortunes in past and present with an eye illumined by the intricate

> channels of commerce, he will probably find that on purely economic grounds everyone of them stands indicted. Are the sources of a man's wealth in real estate? Then how about the unearned increment? Did he make it by railroads, street-cars, gas works, or telegraph lines? Then how about the proprietary rights of the people in natural monopolies? He has a silent partner, the people, who contributed to the business the use of the public streets, and exercised on its behalf the invaluable right of eminent domain. Has he paid that silent partner adequately or has he perhaps tricked that patient partner out of the small profit agreed upon by watering the stock and by other manipulations? Was the money made through a national bank? Then how about the matter of getting interest on the United States bonds deposited, and also on income by the bank notes issued on the basis of these bonds? Was it made by manufacturing, publishing or by great retail stores? Then how about that whole question of the wages system, and of surplus values, and profits. . .? I am. . . calling attention to the fact that nearly all of the sources of great wealth have been challenged by thoughtful and fair-minded men as having in themselves an element of injustice and being so profitable mainly by the personal appropriation of what belongs to part or all of the community. Even the simplest forms of lending money and getting interest on it are called into question (3).

Rauschenbusch was not only critical of the unjust nature of wealth getting, but of the very nature of wealth itself. For Rauschenbusch, it was the major divisive force of society; it destroyed the fraternity and solidarity of humankind. Rauschenbusch argues:

> . . . wealth exerts a desocializing and divisive influence. It wedges apart groups that belong together. Dives and Lazarus may live in the front and rear of the same block, but with no sense of solidarity. . . . [W]ealth as Jesus saw it, flouted the value of life, dissolved the spiritual solidarity of whole classes, and kept the lowly low. . . (SPJ, 1916: 125).

76/ Significantly, Rauschenbusch does not hold rich and poor alike equally responsible for the sins of the social order. He places the burden of responsibility on wealthy as the "strong who have elbowed their way to the top" rather than on the poor as the "weak ones whom. . . [the] climbing feet [of the wealthy] have pressed down. . ." (RK, 1891: 224). He argues:

> We frequently hear protest against the habit of denouncing the rich as a class and lauding the poor as a class. The assertion is

> that both have equal temptations and equal chances of being bad. I deny it. If the chances are equal why does Christ make them unequal? Why does he say that it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom, and not that it is hard for *any* man? (RK, 1891: 219).

77/ Rauschenbusch's critique of capitalism and its violation of solidarity extended to war. He defined war in terms of the lack of solidarity. He believed war to cause "a rupture of fellowship on a large scale" (SPJ, 1916: 26). But he also believed war to be caused by the disintegration of solidarity. He holds capitalism, specifically its competitive commercial interests, to be more often than not the primary cause of war. For Rauschenbusch:

> The rapacity of commerce has been the secret spring of most wars. . . Few wars have ever been fought for the sake of justice, or for the people. . . .The governing classes pour out the blood and wealth of nations for private ends, and exude patriotic enthusiasm like a squid secreting ink to hide its retreat (Quoted in Lipphard, n.d.: 12).

78/ Rauschenbusch proposed that the resocialization of the land take place through taxation, specifically the Single Tax proposal of Henry George. Rauschenbusch opposed individual income tax on the grounds that a worker has the right to the material value of his/her labor. But land, the source of all material value, was not created by human labor and could be taxed. Rauschenbusch, following Henry George, proposed that land in private possession be taxed on the basis of the increase of value accruing after a given date. Past values and the title to the land would remain in the hands of the owner. Rauschenbusch further proposed that the taxation on the land be gradually increased over a period of time until the tax absorbed the annual rent or increased value. He believed government should retain all lands currently in its possession and sell no further assets.

Although Henry George had influenced Rauschenbusch early in his New York ministry and Rauschenbusch adopted George's Single Tax plan, Rauschenbusch eventually parted company with George. In Klaus Jaehn's analysis, George failed to understand society as an organism and recognize the more fundamental changes necessary for a regenerated social order. Jaehn says:

> . . . the time came when Rauschenbusch felt that George was too much of an individualist. George was unable to see society as an organism, as did Rauschenbusch. And this was the reason why George did not see the necessity for radical changes in the social order. In this respect, Rauschenbusch was much more in sympathy with the Socialists. . . (1976: 47).

79/ Rauschenbusch believed that the natural course of laissez-faire capitalism was toward combination rather than competition. This was certainly evident in Rauschenbusch's age with the rise of the corporate structure, monopolies and the work of such "trust titans" as Andrew Carnegie, John Rockefeller and J.P. Morgan (D. Kennedy and T. Bailey, 1986: 276). If capitalism was to move in the direction of monopolistic structures, the question for Rauschenbusch, in the words of F.H. Giddings, became: "Shall the chief and controlling means of production in the United States, including. . . resources. . . and loanable capital be owned by a billionaire. . . or. . . we ordinary human beings, [who] in our collective capacity. . . [will] work out the reality of a democratic republic?" (CSO, 1912: 436). If competition was becoming obsolete and the course for the future was toward combination then, for Rauschenbusch, " a monopoly over which the people have clear jurisdiction and which will turn its income into the public treasury, is by far the best kind of monopoly (CSO, 1912: 435-436).

80/ In *Paradox of the Progressive Mind 1890-1917* (1958), David W. Noble concludes that the goal of Rauschenbusch's social ethic was nothing more than a social democracy. Although Rauschenbusch understood "the path toward the Christianization of society. . . [to be] radical democratization" (Jaehn, 1976: 46), the goal of Rauschenbusch's ethic was the Christianization of the social order and the establishment of the material basis for the evolution of the kingdom of God. Rauschenbusch believed "modern democracy. . . [to be] a child of Christianity" ("Ideas of the New Testament, 1899: 30), but social democracy always remained a means in his ethic, never its goal. Robert Handy points out that, "Rauschenbusch was more realistic and secularly oriented than many Christians, but he. . . sought a specifically Christian civilization" (1971: 168). The meaning of the Christian civilization sought by Rauschenbusch was always, ultimately, its transformation into the kingdom of God. For Rauschenbusch:

> Church and State are alike but practical organizations of humanity for special ends. Together they serve what is greater than either: humanity. Their common aim is to transform humanity into the Kingdom of God (CSC, 1907: 380).

A Christian social order as the basis for the kingdom of God, which certainly included social democracy, was the goal of Rauschenbusch's ethic and work.

81/ In a statement representative of other critics of Rauschenbusch (Janet Fishburn, et. al.), the historian, Cushing Strout, judges Rauschenbusch's attempt to apply the principle of solidarity, expressed most fully in the family, to the social order as unrealistic and based on a nineteenth century idealization of family life and home. Strout says:

> Rauschenbusch's extensive idealization of the home as the incarnation of his social ethic, an idea common to ante-bellum reformers as well, is matched by his lack of attention to specific economic or theoretical issues of Socialist thought. Rauschenbusch's argument for Socialism is, in one sense, merely a moral conclusion following from his desire to extend the model of the family to the whole of society, as if love, rather than justice, were an appropriate organizing standard for a complex, bureaucratic, urban industrial society. . . In the midst of the tragedy of the First World War he could assert in *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917) that 'the social gospel is based on the belief that love is the only true working principle of human society.' Rauschenbusch wished to identify Christianity with social justice and not merely with charitable love, but his idealization of the family led him to blur this distinction (1974: 243).

Strout's critique correctly points out that Rauschenbusch understood the family as that social unit which most fully embodied the principle of love based on the human instinct of solidarity. Rauschenbusch says:

> 'The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man' is one of the cherished phrases of our time; it expresses the faith that the same solidarity and tenderness which we know in family life will yet become common in our wider social relations (CSO, 1912: 128).

Although Rauschenbusch may have idealized the family, the thrust of his argument is the hope that the principle common to the family life, the principle of solidarity, would be the common basis of social relations. If he idealized family life, he never attempted to apply the family as a model to the wider social order. The model which he called for was a model of economic cooperation and collective ownership.

Secondly, Rauschenbusch clearly discerned the difference between the justice required if the social order was to be regenerated and the possibility for the expression of love once a regeneration of the social order had taken place. Rauschenbusch says:

> . . . Christ's commandment of love presupposes the world's commandment of justice. . . Working men are fond of saying: 'We want justice not charity.' It is a good saying. Perhaps it would be better to say: 'First justice, then charity.' After justice has been done, there will still be ample room for love. . . This demand the lower classes have a right to make. . . 'First give us what is ours by justice; then if you wish to do anything for us from love, we shall appreciate your love. But if you do not love us enough to be just to us, do not call it love' (RK, 1891: 192).

A more accurate and fairer analysis than that of Strout would point out, as has Arthur C. McGiffert, that Rauschenbusch sought to reorganize the structures of society along the lines of justice and cooperation so that the possibility for the full expression of love could be realized, as it was in ideal family life (1938: 105).

Finally, in the end, Rauschenbusch could hold that "love is the only true working principle of human society" insofar as he believed the kingdoms of this world were to become the kingdom of God. Love, in this perspective, becomes the deepest and only true working reality, for it is the teleology of the whole social order. Teleologically speaking, love becomes the most real rather than an unreal working principle.

Endnotes for Chapter V

82/ Kenneth Cauthen points out that Rauschenbusch stands in the liberal tradition, albeit as an evangelical liberal, with his requirement that theology incorporate the contemporary insights into its formulations and evolve with the evolution of human experience. Cauthen says:

> Evangelical liberals held to the position that the revelation of God in Christ constituted the universal norm of religious truth, but the patterns by which Christ was interpreted were thought to change with experience. In line with the liberal approach to theology Rauschenbusch maintains that since the social gospel creates a new type of religious experience, it will create a new theology (1962: 90).

In *Righteousness of the Kingdom* (1891) Rauschenbusch speaks eloquently to the point when he says:

> The God who has adapted plant and animal life to the exigencies of climate and soil in such marvelous diversity will surely have as closely fitting a religious garment for the multiform spiritual life of humanity. Let every bird sing its own note. Let every man utter the word that God has spoken in his heart. And let every generation formulate in its own vernacular the eternal truths of Jesus. Only then will it be a 'gospel' to preacher and hearer and not a study in dead languages (177-178).

Rauschenbusch's liberal methodology came under criticism despite his insistence that a social interpretation of the Christian doctrines came closest to that intended by the scripture. William R. Hutchison points out:

> Adaptation to the present was. . . of course, construed [by Rauschenbusch] as realignment with the original message of Christianity, and with what Rauschenbusch took to be the most powerful and valid tradition of Old Testament prophecy. But critics. . . argue[d] that this move still, in effect, left modern culture in the position of prophesying to Christ, more than the reverse. Modern culture -- or at least the dynamic, better spirit thereof -- was being granted the right to decide what is most valid both in the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament and in the teaching of Jesus (1976: 71).

83/ A significant issue raised by critics vis-a-vis Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the doctrine of God is Rauschenbusch's understanding of God's transcendence. Visser 't Hooft has described Rauschenbusch's concept as pantheistic. In the words of Kenneth Cauthen: "The extent to which the doctrine of immanence is carried gives strong weight to the charge of Visser 't Hooft that Rauschenbusch is a pantheist. . . " (1962: 95). Carlyle Marney has argued that Rauschenbusch's concept of God so emphasizes God's immanence that the question which must be asked is: "Does Rauschenbusch have a God transcendent?" (1959: 23). Marney summarizes the critical case when he says:

> . . . either by overemphasis on the immanence of God or by theological defection, the writings of Rauschenbusch do not reveal anything like the balance of transcendence-immanence necessary to theological expression today (1959: 23).

Rauschenbusch certainly emphasizes God's immanence in his interpretation. God is understood as the bond of racial unity and the power in history informing the work of social regeneration.

However, Rauschenbusch's notion of God is neither pantheistic nor solely immanentist. Rauschenbusch does not identify God with human consciousness nor human history in pantheistic fashion. According to Arthur C. McGiffert:

> Visser 't Hooft. . . should have written with more precision when he states that 'the idea of a democratic God indicates very clearly that the direction of thought of the social gospel is towards pantheism.' Karl Heim's illuminating word about the theological meaning of pantheism may serve as a corrective. Pantheism is the acceptance of the past course of events as conferring validity upon the present situation. Certainly the advocates of the social gospel are not pantheists in that sense at all (1938: 103).

Nor is it accurate to argue that Rauschenbusch so overemphasizes the immanence of God that transcendence is not present in his God-concept. For

Rauschenbusch, God is both transcendent over creation as well as present in creation. Walter Muelder argues that, "Transcendence and immanence are organically one in the doctrine of the Kingdom of God" (1957: 11). It is God eternal in the midst of time, yet present in history and the bond of racial unity who, for Rauschenbusch, will bring the kingdom to fulfillment (TSG, 1917: 139). Arthur C. McGiffert concludes his discussion with the perspective that Rauschenbusch and the early proponents of the social gospel assumed and lived by faith in God transcendent. McGiffert argues that there was no need to emphasize the transcendent when what was required was emphasis on the immanent. McGiffert summarizes the needs of the social situation in which Rauschenbusch and the others conceived their theologies when he says:

> Had it been their policy to stress such points [i.e., transcendence] their voice would have been no more than an echo of the Christian voice of the centuries. To sound another note, which at the moment had become almost completely silent, rightly seemed to them to be their special mission (1938: 104).

In the interests of a social theology, Rauschenbusch emphasizes a God immanent in history, but Rauschenbusch's God-concept is not devoid of a God transcendent for it is the God transcendent over history who alone can bring the kingdom to fulfillment in God's own time.

84/ Rauschenbusch's functional understanding of the church as the social organ of salvation is reflected in his consideration of the question of Christian unity. Henry W. Bowden, in his article, "Walter Rauschenbusch and American Church History" (1966), and his study, *Church History in the Age of Science* (1971) points out that Rauschenbusch never considered church unity in terms of a theological synthesis, but rather as a basis for the possibility of collective social action. Bowden says:

> Rauschenbusch mentioned three of his own 'motives for seeking union', . . . which make it clear he never thought in terms of church union at all. [First] he regarded the doctrines and practices which kept denominations part as 'antiquated and trivial'. [Second]. . . denominational rivalry was wasteful . . . [Third] the most important motive for Rauschenbusch was the 'tremendous need of united social action.'
>
> . . .
>
> It was better, in his view, to achieve cooperative action and begin dealing with social evils at once than to prolong suffering while chasing the chimera of complete synthesis (1966: 247).

85/ Although personal prayer is a significant aspect of Rauschenbusch's work, evidenced in his book, *For God and the People: Prayers of the Social*

Awakening (1910), it is not considered in the main body of this study. Rauschenbusch's perspective on prayer will be briefly considered here.

Prayer for Rauschenbusch was an important aspect of religious experience and was informed by his social perspective. Christian prayer was required to bring the one who prayed closer to others as well as God. Rauschenbusch carried his experience of prayer into the social movement (Bodein, 1944: 69), but the social movement informed his understanding of prayer. Henry Burke Robins says:

> Mystic he was in a very true sense; for God was so directly real to him. But the very sense of solidarity which led him to seek God controlled his intercourse with him (1928: 40).

Rauschenbusch's introduction to *Prayers of the Social Awakening* (1910), "The Social Meaning of the Lord's Prayer," is the clearest example in his writings of how the perspective of solidarity informs his understanding of prayer. For Rauschenbusch, the great prayer of the social awakening was the Our Father. He believed it could be fully prayed only when it was prayed from the perspective of Jesus, i.e., from "the consciousness of human solidarity" (18). Rauschenbusch says:

> Before God no man stands alone. . . . We are one with our fellow-men in all our needs. We are one in our sin and our salvation. To recognize that oneness is the first step toward praying the Lord's Prayer aright That recognition is also the foundation of social Christianity (18).

Jesus' three petitions, "Hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," express for Rauschenbusch the hope for the regeneration and perfection of the common life of humanity here on earth (18). Rauschenbusch interprets the three remaining petitions for bread, forgiveness and rescue from temptation, traditionally considered personal petitions, from a solidaristic perspective. The petition for bread, the basis of all human physical life, allows us to ask for only what is needful, for if some have more than their share, others have less or none at all. For Rauschenbusch: "As we stand thus in common, looking up to God for our bread, every one of us ought to feel the sin and shame of it if he habitually takes more than his fair share and leaves others hungry that he may sufeit" (20). The petition for forgiveness requires first forgiveness of our brothers and sisters (21). The petition of rescue from temptation recognizes that situations of sinful temptation are created in large part by the social life around us (23). For Rauschenbusch, the Our Father is the prayer of Social Christianity: it assumes the solidarity of human life, recognizes the social basis of moral and religious life, and hopes for the regeneration of humankind in all its social relations. Rauschenbusch's interpretation of the Lord's Prayer may be taken as normative for his

understanding of prayer insofar as he holds it to express the mind of Jesus and the perspective of Social Christianity.

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The work of the American theologian, Walter Rauschenbusch, the leading voice of the social gospel movement, continues to be read today. This study presents a retrieval of the theology of Rauschenbusch from the perspective of present day theological discussion going on within the context of hermeneutics. When Rauschenbusch's work is seen as a hermeneutical project in which he changes the understanding of human existence from traditional individualism to that of solidarity, his work can be seen to mediate the Christian message to his day and ours in a social language. It fulfills the very contemporary challenge of theology that an adequate interpretation of the Christian message requires a social understanding of the Christian message.

Darlene Peitz is a recent graduate of St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. She holds an M.A. in historical theology from Notre Dame University, an M.Div. from St. John's Seminary, Plymouth, Michigan and an STL from Regis College, Toronto. The present study is her first major theological effort. She and her husband reside in California with their two sons.